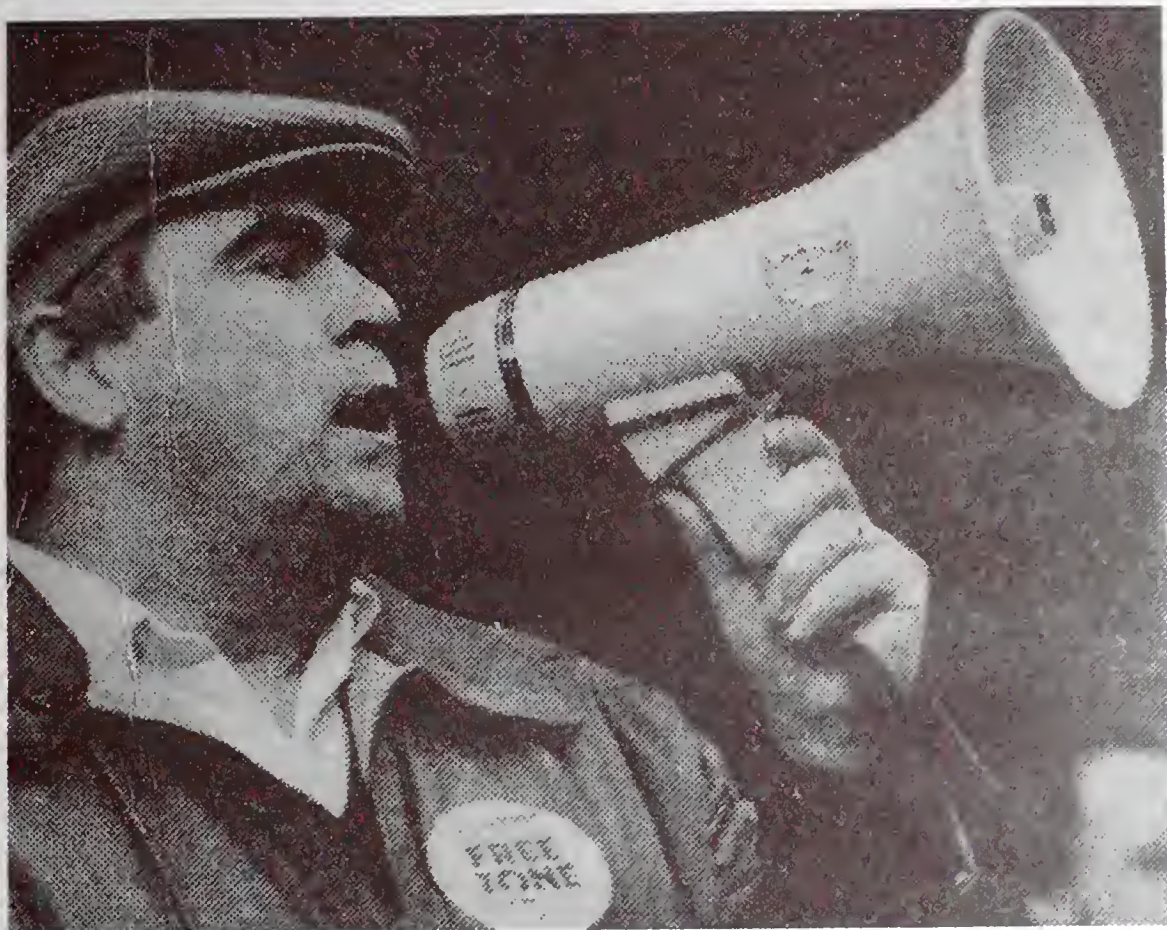


STRIKE FOR FREEDOM



FREE MIKE HICKS

THE JAILING of Mike Hicks is an attack on all sacked News International printers, all Sogat and NGA members, indeed all workers. He is a class war prisoner. The one year sentence (eight months suspended) meted out by Judge Anwyl Davies, no matter how he pompously dressed it up, was a political decision.

This bewigged product of Harrow and Oxford, dressed in his scarlet and ermine symbols of reaction, had the gall to call Mike Hicks, a member of the Sogat executive, a "disgrace to his union". From this dusty old silk this is a compliment. For him and his class it is a disgrace that Mike Hicks has stood by the NI strikers, that he is a militant, a fighter and a thorn in the side of Murdoch and the get rich quick bourgeois establishment. This is all Mike Hicks is guilty of.

The police and the courts framed him in a clumsy attempt to intimidate the pickets at Wapping. According to the police version of events Mike Hicks hit a police inspector with a megaphone. Frankly this is completely out of character. Anyone who knows Mike Hicks knows he has gone out of his way to ensure all actions at Wapping have remained peaceful and firmly within the law.

Clearly the police have picked on Mike Hicks because in a way he has come to symbolise the whole Wapping dispute for them. At every picket he is there out in front, leading, cajoling, singing, generally keeping spirits up. After Murdoch failed in June to get an injunction through the courts to ban him from Wapping the police obviously decided to set him up for a show trial. As has convincingly been shown he was quite simply sent to prison on the basis of police lies.

Because of their narrow minded, craven, vindictive and cynical way of thinking the police imagine that with Mike Hicks out of the way the Wapping pickets will be left leaderless and will quickly lose heart. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The jailing of Mike Hicks will lead to a nationwide surge of solidarity with the NI strikers. Obviously he does not want to be in prison, he has not sought to play the martyr. Nonetheless he is perfectly aware that his time behind bars can be used to lift the whole struggle.

This was the essence of his message from prison. "No one" it read "should be intimidated, nor shirk from standing their ground against Murdoch and his allies in the Tory Party who are using the coercive arm of the state, the police, as their instrument of intimidation."

"None should whine, but organise the British labour movement behind the printers. Lift the battle to new heights."

"Picket the TUC until they are forced to back us. Demand the movement stops condoning the EETPU perjury. Keep fighting. Heads up. We will win."

Every class conscious worker will take note of the defiant spirit behind this call. But what should we do to free prisoner B82649 and take the Wapping dispute to victory? Many remember that it was Mike Hicks who played a key role in bringing printers out on strike in 1972 in order to free the imprisoned dockers leaders. With this in mind Tom Durkin has called for a movement to be built to free Mike Hicks along the lines of the movement which freed the Pentonville Five. We agree.

The situation is full of possibilities but also full of dangers. If Mike Hicks is left in prison to

serve his full sentence, if all we see is extra numbers at the Wapping demonstrations, and even more hot air about crippling NI through stepping up the campaign to boycott the *Sun* and *The Times*, then a golden opportunity will have been lost. If this is allowed to happen there is a great danger of demoralisation setting in. A boycott is correct, demonstrations are focal points and morale boosters but by themselves they cannot beat Murdoch. What is needed is a genuine strategy. The NI strikers have had enough of gestures.

Murdoch has now been producing his main titles without Sogat and NGA members since January 24 1986. He has suffered no major loss of circulation. His profits for the three months up to the end of September nearly doubled compared with 1985. And half of this £50 million profit comes from his Wapping operation.

On top of this he has already sliced off 1,600 workers from the strike by getting them to accept his 'final' offer. His use of the scabberding EETPU has not produced any serious TUC response because of fear of breaking the Tories anti-union laws. High Court injunctions have seen the Sogat leadership call off all picketing of distribution depots again as a result of fear of breaking the Tories anti-union laws. So Murdoch's position is strong, not least because of the cowardly nature of the trade union movement.

As today all effective trade union action is illegal the Sogat leadership has sought to shunt the dispute into a safe PR exercise which relies on the sympathy and trade union consciousness of readers of the *Sun* and *The Times*. A long shot if there ever was one.

To stop Murdoch we need to reassert effective trade unionism. The law must be broken. Wapping must be seen in the context of a broad offensive against the entire working class. To fight back we must involve as many workers in action as possible. Firstly printers on the national press must be brought out. Only in this way can the Wapping stalemate be broken. With the printers leading off, other sections can be mobilised. This is the main lesson of the successful freeing of the Pentonville Five. In 1972 dockers struck and then called upon others to do likewise.

Suggestions that by bringing out printers on all national dailies Murdoch will have no competition is not to see the wood for the trees. If we want truly mass picketing at Wapping, if we want miners, nurses, railway workers and bus drivers etc to come out on strike for Mike Hicks, then printers must set the lead. Indeed how about Mike Hicks' London Wholesale branch of Sogat getting the ball rolling? Surely they can be convinced to come out on strike to free their imprisoned imperial FoC.

We do not think any reliance should be placed on the TUC. Support the printers' non-stop picket of Congress House, but let us have no illusions about shifting it on the EETPU, or anything else, until we have got tens of thousands taking strike action independently of it and the general secretaries who sit on it.

That means it is vital for rank and file strikers to take the running of the whole Wapping struggle into their own hands through the formation of a cross union strike committee.

The fact that the TUC, Sogat and the NGA have allowed Wapping to drag on for nearly a year has cost other print workers dear. Thousands of jobs have already gone, and thousands more will go, unless victory is won and won soon. An all-out print workers' strike could snatch victory from the jaws of 'one paper at a time defeat' and unleash a general working class offensive against union busting bosses and the Tories anti-union laws.

This, not pressurising the TUC to expel the EETPU, is the main plank of a fighting strategy. Bringing the EETPU into line relies on the strength of militancy. With the traditional militancy of print workers brought into play, rank and file EETPU rebellion can be placed on a firm footing.

We say:

- Remember and learn from 1972. Strike for freedom.
- Overcome sectionalism through fighting for one union in the print industry. Establish an elected and recallable joint strike committee to run the NI strike.
- Organise effective mass picketing of Wapping and all Murdoch plants. No compliance with TUC 'guidelines'. Build on the printers' hit squads, transform them into Workers' Defence Corps and use them to defend the picket lines against police attack.
- Bring out the printers. Call upon all workers to take strike action, fight for general strike action to free Mike Hicks.
- Send messages of support to Mike Hicks, c/o Ted Chard, Sogat House, 34, Britannia Street, London WC1.

Jack Conrad



CRISIS AT THE MORNING STAR

ON DECEMBER 3 the *Morning Star* tersely announced that 36 of its employees were to be made redundant. Like any employer, chief executive Mary Rosser expressed "the deepest regret", claimed it has been done "reluctantly" but insisted that unless uneconomic workers were sacked "we have been legally advised that we shall have to close down".

But Rosser's statement did not even touch on the full extent of the crisis facing the *Morning Star*. This is inexcusable. The fact is the paper is confronted with a crisis more profound than anything it has experienced in the past.

Rosser admitted that its deficit this year is £340,000 and that next year it is expected to be of the same order. What she failed to mention was the little matter of the collapse of the much vaunted 'survival plan'.

The 'survival plan' was based on the *Morning Star* 'printing its way out of crisis'. With thousands of donations from individual and trade union supporters a £300,000 deposit was placed on a £1.5 million Urbanite Mark II printing press. This was installed at Farringdon Road with the idea of covering the *Morning Star*'s deficits by obtaining lucrative outside printing work.

Hardly any such commercial printing orders have been obtained. It is this failure of the 'survival plan' which is the immediate cause of the sackings, not the "wage relationship to hours worked" as Rosser claims.

The Urbanite, far from being the salvation of the *Morning Star*, has become an incredibly expensive white elephant. Indeed, instead of the *Morning Star* doing outside printing in order to save itself, it looks like the management committee will go in for asset stripping and the *Morning Star* will have to be printed outside in a last desperate bid to prevent bankruptcy.

None of this was even alluded to in Mary Rosser's statement. Why? Could it be the management committee is attempting to shift the blame for the failure of the 'survival plan' from itself to the printworkers? Comrades may remember they were blamed for the six month delay in going tabloid, they were blamed for the mysterious dispute in the platemaking department a few months ago which shut the paper for several days and now they are blamed for being uneconomic.

So who is to blame for the conflict between management and shop floor? We say if the *Morning Star* management committee think like capitalist bosses, sack like capitalist bosses and economise like capitalist bosses they are 100% to blame.

The management committee has not only failed commercially, it has failed to run a communist enterprise. This undermines the whole *Morning Star* project as envisaged by arch bureaucrat Tony Chater.

This right opportunist hack came to see the *Morning Star* as his paper. He thought he could break the paper's historic links with the Communist Party and ensure the survival of his paper by securing the help of the trade union bureaucracy, by splitting the CPGB and by commercial printing. This perspective has produced oil and water politics.

For example, on the one hand Chater has the *Morning Star* as the cheerleader for the TUC, which backs the notorious YTS, and on the other he gets a pro-CCG journalist to crudely plagiarise the work of *The Leninist* on the need to organise the unemployed. In fact on issue after issue — Brent, the teachers' dispute, imprisoned miners, Ireland, workers' sanctions against apartheid — the *Morning Star* finds itself neither leading nor pleasing.

No wonder circulation continues to fall. No wonder tension has built up between those, like Ken Gill, who want a paper for the TUC and those who want it more closely associated with the Communist Campaign Group. No wonder we say the *Morning Star* has no future without the CPGB.

The Editor

Six months subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50).

Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10, Institutions £20; Europe £16, Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35), Institutions £30 (airmail £45).

Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to November Publications Ltd.

Correspondence to: The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St. Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 2BS.

Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX • World copyright December 1986

LETTERS

Humblest apologies

What an inspiring revolutionary paper *The Trotskyist* — sorry, *Leninist* is. It makes the Communist Manifesto seem like a child's fairy tale by comparison. Let me tender my most abject apologies to it and to that Goliath of revolutionaries, Ian Farrell, for the reprehensible crimes and counterrevolutionary activities I have been engaged in as outlined in your November 6th issue.

Those include — self deception, whining, utopianism, Kautskyism, anti-American chauvinism, anti-Tory Labourite rhetoric (whatever this latter is) — and much more. Writing with his quill pen dipped in fire and brimstone I can picture that doyen of revolutionaries, Ian, sitting in his sparsely furnished room with iron bed, samovar, bare walls, a few bookshelves and a crude wooden table.

His great brow is furrowed in concentration. His grey piercing eyes are like full beam car headlights in a rural road in pitch blackness. His great, black, bristling beard digs into the table top as he leans over it and writes with great concentration and energy.

For my rightwing revisionist and counterrevolutionary crimes I deserve to be transported in chains, hanged, drawn and quartered, beheaded with my head placed on a spike outside of the premises of the "The...ist" BCM, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

The answer to the nuclear war danger, according to our super revolutionary Goliath, is fantastically simple. Oh, why didn't someone think of it before? All that's needed is that the 'working class smashes imperialism by socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries'. Verily, a revolutionary Solomon has come to judgement.

Away with all this old Kautskyist, utopian nonsense about nuclear disarmament and peaceful coexistence. It is a monstrous diversion and treachery. Oh, most illustrious disciple of Leon, fortunately you are at hand to lead us to the completion of the world revolution. How fortunate we are at this critical time. Please come out now from your hidey hole at BCM Box 928 and the awaiting revolutionary masses will follow you to the end of the world.

With humblest apologies for my treacherous crimes
Tom Durkin
London NW2

Hungary

I was pleased to read the article on Hungary and tend to accept your reasoning. Previously, I had been to some extent in agreement with Peter Fryer and the 'Trotskyist' explanation of the revolution and Workers' Councils, etc. However, although you imply Janas Kadar had no alternative but to call the Soviets in, do you agree with their bloody repression of the rebellion? As you state, the Communist Party was responsible for the situation in Hungary and a backlash was inevitable.

Yours fraternally
M Cassle
Leicester

Syndicalists

I am fed up with political parties jumping on the 'unemployed rights' bandwagon. It can be expected of the Labour Party, but now *The Leninist* (though it is a faction, not a party), is up to the same tricks via the Unemployed Workers Charter.

The only (slightly) positive thing I can say about *The Leninist* is that it doesn't shy away from saying that

the UWC is its idea; unlike the NCP, who use infiltration of trades councils (notably Richmond) to get in on and take over the Unemployed Centres and their management committees (especially those with valuable resources). Dirty behind-the-scenes manoeuvring is also a hallmark of the NCP as regards this point. However, most unemployed people are unlikely to read *The Leninist* regularly so will never realise the origins of the UWC; and as the UWC leaflets and bulletins never mention *The Leninist*, I feel the unemployed are being duped.

Yes, there is a need for a National Unemployed Movement, and unemployed activists must form their own Unions so that we can unite in the struggle for our rights and for an end to unemployment. The UWC/*The Leninist* wants the same thing but for its own ends.

UWC/*The Leninist* says it wants unemployed workers to fight alongside employed workers in struggle. We wouldn't disagree with that. But UWC/*Leninist* also says it wants unemployed organisations to join the official Labour/Trade Union Movement. There we differ.

UWC/*Leninist* says it wants to see a national unemployed organisation with a seat on the TUC. Is this then the UWC/*Leninist* tailing the very movement they profess to despise? The TUC would never recognise a national unemployed movement. To believe so is naive, economist thinking. Even in the thirties, the NUWM, led by CP member Wal Hannington, amongst others, was denounced and went unrecognised by the TUC — the same excuse being given as today, that the unemployed should join trade unions. We should be addressing ourselves to why the TUC doesn't want to see such an organisation. The unemployed are in a Catch 22 situation. The TUC says 'join a union', the unions say 'go away'. *The Leninist* calls Kinnock a scab (we agree) but seems to have a weird faith in the TUC.

UWC offers nothing better than the Labour Party does. It needs unemployed centre activists themselves to organise the unemployed. We need no divisive 'help' from front groups. I think that *The Leninist*'s time and money would be better spent on generating communist unity within its own ranks rather than imposing its own particular brand of ultra-leftism on the unemployed via the UWC; as to this, your manipulation of the unemployed at the Jarrow '86 demonstration was opportunistic in the extreme. I suggest the real aim behind the UWC is to recruit people into the CPGB.

Yours,
Amanda Martin
(Brighton and Hove Unemployed Workers' Union)

Labour censors

To the extent that any Unemployment Centre actually exists on the Isle of Wight, it is run under the auspices of the Labour Party. You will appreciate therefore, that we are unlikely to be impressed by your publication.

I would ask you therefore to take us off your mailing list.
Yours faithfully
Robert Jones
Secretary/Agent, Isle of Wight Labour Party, c/o Mr T J Stevens, SE Region TUC.

Scotland

Your "Basil the mouse detective" obsession with my identity obscures your inability to respond to the substantive points in my letter. Instead you mouth mechanically the same old formulae without ever applying them concretely and

creatively to Scotland here and now.

You reiterate ad nauseam the dictum of supporting the right of nations to self determination. How about actually supporting that right? How about stating baldly: "We in *The Leninist* support the right of the Scottish people to self determination. We call on the UK government to hold a plebiscite on Scottish independence. All English communists must support the heroic struggle of the Scottish people." It would make a pleasant change from repetitive lectures on our internationalist duty to oppose nationalism and separatism which contradict your editorial statement (*Leninist*, 42) that "Communists should... [fight] to take the lead in national liberation struggles."

I am not Paul Cockshott. Paul is my friend and comrade. We hold many common political positions. We also use the same word processor. This is an inadequate basis for concluding that we are the same person.

Roch the wind!
Red Rackham
Edinburgh

Shallow chauvinism?

The evolving debate between those in favour of a Scottish Workers' Republic and those who reject this idea has taken a new turn. Comrade Conrad has steered the issue into London fog, as distinct from Scottish mist (in a *Leninist* discussion on the national question) and merely reflects the machinations of his own English imperialist bourgeoisie. He is not the first 'socialist' or 'communist' to express complete chauvinism when it comes to the question of national independence for minorities within the so-called 'United Kingdom'.
Yours fraternally,
Al and Fred Donaldson
Glasgow

Albania

In *The Leninist* No.42, Mary Goodwin talks of Albania's "xenophobic isolation", introduces the concept of "Enverism", puts forward the view that Albania is "undemocratic", states that establishing socialism was "comparatively easy" and denies the existence of foreign agents attempting to overthrow the Albanian socialist state.

The fact that such anti-communist rhetoric has been put forward in a paper calling itself 'Leninist' is disgraceful.

Don't bother giving me a false name: I have left the degenerate social democratic organisation calling itself the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Yours in comradeship,
Donald McLeish
Glasgow

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names and address, and details.



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STRAIGHT LEFT: STILL IN THE CLOSET



Is Nick Wright (left) a 'Parent Against Perverts'?

IT WAS IN issue No.42 of *The Leninist* that we first reprinted this picture of comrade Nick Wright, a prominent Straight Leftist member of the Party in London and employee of Haringey's Police Committee. This very unfortunate photograph shows comrade Wright apparently steaming in against a gay activist. On the night in question gays, lesbians and their supporters were picketing Haringey council, demanding that they upheld their policy of introducing books into the school libraries in the borough that presented gays and lesbians in a relaxed and non-discriminatory way.

The picket was marked by clashes between the gay/lesbian protesters and their supporters on the one side, and a very dubious organisation called 'Parents Against Perverts' on the other. The murky photo above, which subsequently appeared in the bourgeois media, thus put comrade Nick Wright into a very tricky position.

As we pointed out, a communist like comrade Wright should either have been on the picket alongside the gays and lesbians, or if this was impossible due to the nature of his Police Committee work, then he should have simply stayed away altogether. We wanted more than the apparent evidence of this photo however, so we phoned comrade Wright and asked him for his interpretation. He told us pig-headedly: "I am as indifferent to what *The Leninist* thinks as I am to what the bourgeois press say." And the comrade felt himself justified in leaving the matter there. We however, did not...

We decided to investigate the experiences of others who have come across Straight Leftists like comrade Wright and ask them if they had ever noticed homophobic attitudes from the members of this Communist Party faction. In particular, we spoke to comrade Mark Ashton, the ex-General Secretary of the Young Communist League, and a comrade now very active in and around the Party on gay and lesbian rights.

While we have profound disagreements with his politics, comrade Ashton has always been one of the more principled and honest of the Eurocommunist elements in the League and Party. What he told us confirmed our view that there is definitely a split amongst the Straight Leftists on this important question. Comrade Ashton told us that he had never experienced direct discrimination from a Straight Leftist in the YCL as:

"... the battles inside the League at that time were all couched in more expressly 'political' terms. Nothing along those lines was ever clearly stated. But I think it is fair to say that you always got the impression that *Straight Left* stands for more than just

'straight' down the line labour movement politics: I think the *Straight in Straight Left* is quite an important little word. There's a *double entendre* there, if you like.

"But I never actually experienced blatant anti-gay discrimination in the League. I've had lots of experiences of people who have been afraid to admit that they were prejudiced, or that they thought it was an irrelevant issue what straight peoples' attitude was towards people who didn't fit into a so-called heterosexual 'norm'. I think that was because of the political climate in the League at the time. They found it hard to grapple with the whole issue of sex and the political nature of sexuality.

"But then on the other hand, there are people in *Straight Left*, or associated with it, who are gay themselves! Yet they don't seem to have any problems in making the two compatible and symbiotic. I can understand their position. I can understand the position of people who say 'We've got to drop all this side issue nonsense, and get straight down to the class struggle!'

"There are people, lesbians and gay men in the Party, who are basically liberals and don't have a class analysis at all. That's probably got a lot to do with the *short term* commitment that left groups have given to lesbian and gay rights.

"So I can understand a lot of those types of arguments about gay liberation and the class struggle. But I also think that people in the *Straight Left* faction have personal problems about sexuality. They are *loath* to talk about it, they are *loath* to discuss it because it throws up more issues than their narrow politics can actually deal with. So they prefer to push it all away and say 'This is irrelevant' or 'It's bourgeois' or 'It's divisive and it is all just about a few middle class people struggling for positions in the labour movement'.

"... I think it is important to remember that Lenin saw it as vital that there was no 'crime' without a victim in respect to sexual legislation. That doesn't mean that it's a free-for-all, but he recognised that it was ludicrous to claim that there was anything 'criminal' about homosexuality. I think it was the coming to power of Stalin — with his militarisation of the Soviet Union, the need for a strong, firm 'mother country' with all the connotations that go with that (also I suspect his personal dislike of gay people) — that was behind the Soviet legislation of that period.

"I've been studying the history of the early lesbian and gay movement. The Soviet Union used to go along to the international conference on sex held by the Institute of Sexual Science, which was very closely associated with the SPD and KPD in Germany in the run up to the 1918 revolution and also well into the '30s. The Soviets were there praising sexual

liberation, and many of the representatives from the capitalist world were beraiding the Soviet reforms and saying this is the model. But with the coming to power of Stalin, of course, that all started to change ..."

The fact that there are members or supporters of *Straight Left* who are actually gay themselves surely represents a problem for this faction. Straight Leftism regards it as the height of Marxist-Leninist principle not to criticise the policies of the Soviet state or of the CPSU. Yet homosexuality has been illegal in the USSR since the mid-1930s. Surely, comrades, is there room for a little criticism here?

In the Straight Leftist semi-open house journal, *Communist*, there recently appeared a letter that may indicate that pressures are building up inside this faction, a faction that has always been an unprincipled left/right centrist clot where political debate and clarification is feared (and stamped on) as it might actually shatter the organisation. A 'Dave Neill' obviously felt compelled to write, and his letter was published in the August 1986 issue of *Communist*. He advises his comrades that:

"Merely because some areas of struggle seem to have been captured by the petty-bourgeois radicals within our Party, we must not yield up those areas."

Lesbians and gay men, claimed Dave, were, for the working class, potential "allies of great worth". Tell us, comrade 'Neill', do Nick Wright's actions in Haringey, as depicted on this page, help to win lesbians and gays to the cause of the Communist Party and the proletariat? After all, in *The Leninist* No. 42, we also spoke to Brian Topping, the open editor of *Communist*, and he was unable to actually refer us to even one article in his publication that made the position of Straight Leftism clear on this matter and also refused point blank to give us even an *unattributable* quote from a *Communist* spokesperson that would clarify their position on the matter.

So tell us comrade Neill, or any of the gay or non-prejudiced comrades in the SL faction, don't you find it the height of hypocrisy that in that very same issue, Brian Topping can write in his editorial that: "Sectionalism, parochialism, chauvinism in the trade union movement need to be challenged ... the capitalists play off Tyneside against Clydeside, boiler-maker against engineer, Frenchman against Spaniard, and of course, black against white ..."

And what about gay against straight, Brian, or doesn't that count? Straight Leftism evidently wants to let this matter quietly drop. We don't intend to let it. The floor, comrade Nick Wright and the Straight Leftist faction, is yours ...

Unfortunately the report presented to November's EC meeting on the Young Communist League contained nothing but platitudes. Our YCL now only exists in name. Despite this all that the EC could come up with was the shop worn proposals it has been making for the last two decades. Districts should help the YCL re-card its members, young Party members should join and YCLers should be encouraged to take part in joint activity with Party branches. Wow, what a strategy for winning the millions of young workers who hate Thatcher, the Tories and the capitalist system. Not surprisingly the report admits the YCL's decline has been "used by those who argue that the political strategy of the YCL and the *British Road* are incorrect."

It is impossible to believe that the 17 Grenadian revolutionaries convicted of killing Maurice Bishop got a fair trial. That the US puppets did not give a damn about the death of Maurice Bishop is obvious. His killing was used as an excuse for invasion, nothing more. Bishop was a revolutionary whom the US imperialists loathed, they painted him as a Soviet agent and a leader of a communistic regime. So why put anyone on trial for his killing? For the sake of justice? Hardly. The trial was a useful way to intimidate the masses, decapitate the New Jewel Movement and give the US invasion a crusading veneer. Of course, what the US was concerned about was reasserting its regional hegemony and fuelling its anti-Soviet war drive. Yet despite the trial and the shattering of the NJM, progressive forces are stirring again, NJM supporter Chester Humphrey, whose heroic hunger strike sparked a campaign to prevent him being extradited to the US, was re-elected to the leadership of the Technical and Allied Workers' Union, and in the face of 40% unemployment and deteriorating economic and social conditions in the country, other unions are now lining up against the Blaize puppet government. In an effort to head off this pressure the government did its best to turn the trial of the NJM leaders into a trial of the NJM revolution itself. The *Morning Star*, with its inability to understand revolutionary struggle, thinks those "responsible for killing Maurice Bishop and for the disorder and chaos which preceded this killing, must be answerable to the Grenadian people. "They must face trial" it legalistically insists (Editorial December 4, 1986). We say: "Don't try the NJM 17, free them." Solidarity is being co-ordinated by The New Jewel 17 Committee. It can be contacted at: 388, Seven Sisters Road, London N4, Tel: 01-802 3370. The NJM 17 were tried by a kangaroo court.

It sentenced to death ten members of the NJM Central Committee and four leading NJM officers in the People's Revolutionary Army. They, and three non-NJM soldiers, sentenced to between 30 and 45 years, must all be freed.

It could be said that those communists who want to integrate themselves into bourgeois society first turn feminist. Amongst our leadership feminism has become official ideology. At the November EC meeting of our CPGB the feminists arranged a men-only session on "sexuality and masculinity" after the doyen of Party feminists, comrade Ticia Davis, presented a report going under the title "moving forward on feminism". The men-only workshop was chaired by Jonathan Rutherford, a non-EC member and honorary 'feminist'. He told the EC "we exist in a political culture" that "tends to see politics as about other people's problems." Because of this he called for positive thinking about gay liberation and feminism in order to combat "sexism and class-ism". The Straight Leftists might laugh at this, but then they have their own self-confessed "Marxist feminists", like comrade Susan Michie. As to the *Morning Star*, it has Helen Bennett, and the CCG is, according to Ron Bellamy, the editor of its review, all for "socialist feminism". Yet for communists like Lenin, Luxemburg, Kollontai and Zetkin, feminism was a bourgeois ideology, which had nothing to do with genuine women's liberation. For them it was a sectionalist ideology and had to be fought just like male sexism. Quite right.

FIGHT BACK

A deep pessimism holds sway in the leadership of the official labour movement. Willis, Dean, Jordan, and Hammond tell us we cannot fight back against the bosses. But we workers have no choice. We must fight back. Our wages, jobs, conditions and rights depend on it. That is why more and more of our readers are backing *The Leninist* with their hard earned cash. They know that only by getting rid of the cowardly, inept and treacherous Labourite misleaders and building a genuine Leninist CPGB can we effectively fight back. We have had three more monthly standing order pledges totalling £16 thanks to comrades WH and SR from London and GH from Manchester. Moreover our £600 monthly fighting fund stands at £229 as we go to press. Our next issue will be published on January 15 so remember we must reach target by the end of the year and begin 1987 with a fund already half raised.

THE IRAN-IRAQ war has now been piling up victims for six years. Prior to the outbreak of war there had existed a tense, unstable equilibrium between the two states. In September 1980, this was shattered when President Saddam Hussein of Iraq's ruling Ba'athist Party attempted to annex through military force the Shat-al-Arab waterway, which is of vital importance for the transport of oil by tanker. In doing so, he declared Iraq to be the defender of all Arab states in the region from the 'Shi'a subversion' posed by the previous year's 'Islamic revolution' in Iran, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Saddam looked at Iran — disrupted as it was by revolution — as easy meat. At the same time he looked upon it with fear. Iraq is a medium developed capitalist country which is faced with the constant danger of social instability. Khomeini's Shi'a Islamic Republic was threatening to 'export' its revolution to the highly unstable Sunni dominated states in the region via their downtrodden indigenous Shi'a populations. Iraq, a secular state with a Sunni dominated government, is, like all the other states in the region, in no real sense a nation state. Only a minority (45%) of those in Iraq are of the Sunni religion, of whom over 40% are Kurdish, an oppressed national minority. With internal relationships — both social and economic — highly fragile, the potential threat posed by the new neighbouring Iranian regime was a little too much. Saddam therefore attempted to kill two birds with one stone, he attempted to find a solution to Iraq's problems through an invasion.

Had Saddam succeeded, Iraq would have removed a threat to its internal stability and gained portions of Iranian territory that would have been economically valuable. Primarily, it would have given Iraq hegemony over the Gulf. By posing as defender of the Gulf states (i.e., Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Oman), Iraq was able to line them up behind it in the war. All had highly vulnerable semi-feudal internal social structures; all feared the Iranian threat.

Iraq relies heavily on these oil-rich states for support, with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait having supplied over \$30bn between them so far. The oil revenues of these states have allowed them to supply Iraq with the money for, and accumulate themselves, much high-tech weaponry. In the UAE alone, between 1971-82, arms expenditure increased by a staggering 10,440%.

However, the Gulf States have no wide-eyed innocent faith in the good intentions of big brother Iraq. They are supplying it with enough to keep on fighting, but not to win. No one, other than the two combatants, ever wished for a decisive result to the war. Much better that the two most expansionist and militarily powerful countries in the Gulf "should in tandem sap their energies and thereby diminish the challenge which they could pose to the more conservative, Western orientated governments in the area" (*Financial Times* editorial, September 17 1984).

Iraq's finances, and the fact that its backers have easy access to the world arms market, have given it a clear advantage in air power to Iran. Iran, having a greater population (about 30m to Iraq's 12m in the late '70s) has responded with World War I-style 'human wave' and trench warfare tactics. Indeed Khomeini, in the name of the Islamic jihad (holy war), has been able to win the Iranian people into providing his cannon fodder in a way unimaginable to the recruiting sergeants of World War I. Against Iraqi high-tech, Iran uses weight of numbers, fanaticism and attrition.

This has had some success for the Iranians. In the summer of 1982, Iran was able to drive Iraqi forces out of most of the territory it had gained, and was able to occupy and hold some Iraqi territory. Iran has now approximately one million troops at the front in preparation for what the government has promised will be a decisive year.

Unsurprisingly the economic pressures on both sides are terrific. Both countries rely heavily on oil exports, and have therefore been hit by the decrease in oil prices. Also the 'tanker war' on oil tankers and terminals at ports and in the Gulf whittle away at revenues. "Baghdad will be lucky to earn \$8bn to \$9bn this year from oil, down from an original projection of \$15bn." (*Financial Times*, September 8 1986). As a response, Iraq has upped the tanker war, reducing Iranian oil exports from 1.6m to 600,000 barrels per day. Hence both parties' desire to see the back of the war.

But Iran now has the upper hand, and their precondition to the ending of hostilities is that Saddam must go. And Saddam doesn't want to. Besides, with over 100,000 dead and 150,000 captured or wounded on the Iraqi side, and well over 250,000 deaths on the Iranian side, such an indecisive end to Saddam's war "to defend the Gulf states" and Khomeini's "jihad" would

have huge social repercussions. None of the antagonisms which caused the war would be resolved.

Communists and the War

In Iran, the communist Tudeh Party has, it must be said, failed to put forward a consistent proletarian position, both during the war and before it. Since its inception in 1941, it has argued for the subordination of the interests of the proletariat to both the foreign policy of the Soviet state and supposedly 'progressive' sections of the Iranian bourgeoisie, whether it be the Mossadeq government in 1953 or the mullahs until recently.

After supporting the Shah for a number of years in the 1970s Tudeh was clearly edging towards a dangerous alliance with any group just so long as it was anti-Shah. Politbureau member Nouredin Kianouri, writing in *World Marxist Review* of February 1976 advocated an alliance with "social forces in Iran, which, though far removed from the left, even from anything democratic, are eager to see the present regime done away with". So, whilst Tudeh was implicitly edging towards an alliance with sections of the clergy and the national bourgeoisie behind them, they were at least honest that these forces were anti-democratic (read reactionary). This was not to be the case when the alliance was actualised.

Soon Tudeh fell right behind the 'Imam line' as the '79 revolution took off. In a pamphlet, *Facts About Iran*, in June 1980 it wrote: "The role of Imam Khomeini was outstanding because he stood his ground with great determination ... against the pseudo clergy" (?) and has made "a move in the direction of providing all forms of social-political freedoms for the peoples of Iran; ... for eliminating the exploitation of the working and exploited masses and for their welfare."

This is fantastic and dangerous. It is also totally at variance with Lenin's position, which necessitates "a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries." (*Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions*). What exactly was Tudeh saying here? Was the Islamic Republic "eliminating the exploitation of the working and exploited masses"? Of course not. Such statements can only be interpreted to mean that a bourgeois state was carrying out the tasks of dictatorship of the proletariat — socialisation of production, thus ending capitalist commodity production and exploitation; workers' democracy, etc — advancing towards socialism. This is, of course, nonsense.

The state of the Shah may have been smashed but power remains with the bourgeoisie. The overthrow of the Shah was not a social revolution but a political revolution by one section of the bourgeoisie against another. Tudeh only wanted to see the anti-imperialist slogans of the Khomeini revolution, and in doing so it utterly confused form with essence. It did not just paint a bourgeois-democratic movement as communist, it also painted red the bourgeois-reactionary movement of the mullahs, which rode to power on the back of the people's democratic and anti-imperialist yearnings.

To do this the Tudeh Party had to drop any pretence at holding a Marxist position on the state. Instead of the task of the working class being to overthrow the bourgeois state and establish its own state, the state being the organ of one class to maintain its rule, it becomes an amorphous multi-class concept which the proletariat has to struggle within. According to Tudeh, the Iranian state contained everything from downright reactionaries (which had to be opposed) to a 'popular wing' (which had to be supported).

The 'popular wing' was, Tudeh said, headed by Imam Khomeini. Indeed, in the hands of Tudeh theoreticians Islam in general suddenly became "anti-imperialist, anti-dictatorial and consequently democratic, popular and" (believe it or not) "anti-capitalist". (Interview with Tudeh General Secretary, Nouredin Kianouri, quoted in *Merip Reports*, No. 86, March/April 1980).

Anybody who did put up a fight against Khomeini's regime could be assured of virulent hostility from Tudeh. Kurdish liberation was swept under the carpet as Tudeh turned a blind eye to national oppression in Iranian Kurdistan. The Fedayi Guerrillas and such groups as the Maoist Peykar which were pushed into taking up armed resistance against the Islamic Republic were condemned as "terrorists" and, in cheap attempts at utilising the anti-Americanism of the Iranian masses, denounced as the "American 'left'" in the columns of the Tudeh press.

As late as 1982, with the hot breath of

NEITHER HUSSEIN NOR KH



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Khomeini's jailers and executioners on the back of the necks of Tudeh members and supporters, a CODIR (the Tudeh-backed solidarity committee in Britain) pamphlet, *The Truth about the Mojahedin*, condemned the Mojahedin as the "spearhead of the counterrevolution" for their resistance to Khomeini and the Islamic regime.

With such a position it is unsurprising that Tudeh should have backed Khomeini, and by definition their own bourgeoisie, in the Iran-Iraq war. Iraq's invasion was condemned as an imperialist plot and the Iranian masses were urged to contribute to national defence and if necessary to die for 'their' country, in defence of 'the revolution'. Tudeh members stood guns in hand against the Iraqi workers on the battlefields in defence of the mosque and capital of Iran. This reactionary stand was maintained for two years. The *CODIR Newsletter* of April 1982 true to form trumpeted "yet another spectacular military victory for the people of revolutionary Iran in the 18 month long war of aggression". And the bodies piled higher.

The new Tudeh line

Not until the Islamic Republic turned on the Tudeh Party did their line change. Thousands of Party members, including Secretary General comrade Kianouri, were imprisoned, charged

with being Soviet spies. Initially, the disorientated Tudeh merely whimpered of their loyalty to the 'revolution', like a faithful dog unexpectedly kicked by its master. Tudeh had unwittingly played into the hands of Khomeini. It had rallied the working class behind the clergy, neutralised it after the overthrow of the Shah, prevented it from playing any independent role; it had lined the working class up behind the new Iranian theocratic regime, and finally having sent them to war in defence of that regime Tudeh was of no further use to Khomeini and was therefore discarded.

The viciousness with which it was discarded forced Tudeh to organise, out of necessity, against the regime. The confused and decimated Party turned in an anarchic way back to the workers it had led up the garden path.

Tudeh replaced their misty-eyed illusions in Khomeini with what was in essence social pacifism: "The Tudeh Party of Iran strongly condemns the criminal policy of Khomeini's regime in continuing the war, and demands an immediate ceasefire on all fronts, the start of direct negotiations between the two sides, and the resolution of all disputes on the basis of mutual respect for the national sovereignty, rights and interests of both countries." (*Tudeh News*, October 2 1985). In other words the butcher Khomeini was supposed to sit down with the butcher Saddam to negotiate a just peace.



Party states in the *Morning Star* of July 23 1986: "the only way for the transformation of political power to the united popular front is through the application of revolutionary violence." Now, the bit about revolutionary violence is all well and good, but what is this 'united popular front' creature? What forces would it include, and most importantly, who would lead it? Remember that not so very long ago, the reactionary Islamic Republic was being described by Tudeh in 'progressive' terms.

Is Tudeh offering the Iranian masses yet another (more secular) Khomeini? Certainly, with the current ambiguities in its statements and its refusal to honestly and comprehensively face its past mistakes, if we are to be honest this cannot be ruled out.

Even if it does, Tudeh can be assured of slavish, fake, 'support' from centrist sycophants abroad. *Straight Left* of October 1983 tied itself into a very lovely knot justifying its past twists and turns defending (and then not defending) the 'Imam line': In the first two years these revolutionary democrats" (i.e., Khomeini and Co. — AM) "managed to drive their opponents from the government, but failed to bring about the necessary profound social reforms. Consequently, rightwingers" (i.e., Khomeini and co. — AM) "later took control".

Every line a howler. It seems almost too unkind to tar the Tudeh Party with the idiocy of the Straight Leftists. But after all, they were just trying to justify Tudeh's positions. The tragedy is that Tudeh actually expected Khomeini to carry through these "necessary profound social reforms." Tudeh has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Tudeh shows no understanding that working class political independence is no luxury but a necessity. Never having learnt this, Tudeh has always looked to support this or that section of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie, it has no perspective to fight for working class hegemony over the revolution.

Communists in Iraq

The Communist Party of Iraq has been more consistent and principled throughout the war. It has called for the defeat of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam. The ICP also stands with the Kurdish people in Iraqi Kurdistan in their struggle for self determination and organises Kurdish partisan units (peshmergas) in the armed struggle against the Saddam regime.

However, the ICP is not entirely free from the tailism which has laid low the Tudeh Party.

The ICP gained a large and influential base in Iraq in the 1950s as a result of the rapid industrialisation taking place at that time and, as a consequence, the creation of a large proletariat. "The ICP organised the largest and most strategic concentrations of workers: the state railway, Basra port, the oil fields." (*Merip Reports*, June 1981). Hand in hand with this came the development of a national bourgeoisie in Iraq, and the strengthening of its political expression, the Ba'ath Party.

Ba'ath took power in July 1968 through a coup led by military officers. Instead of mobilising the Iraqi working class against the Ba'athists, the ICP gave them its support, and in July 1973 entered a 'Progressive National Front' government with them. This was at the time when the Iraqi regime was pursuing a genocidal war against the Kurdish people.

Interviewed on this question in the *Merip Reports* of July 1981, ICP Secretary General comrade Aziz Mohamed weakly excused this position: "The Kurdish movement forced this choice on us. We were always against the killings of Kurdish prisoners however, and we protested to the Ba'athists about this." This position in our view was profoundly mistaken. It only changed because of expediency in 1976 when Saddam turned on the ICP for allegedly organising in the armed forces. This is an example of opportunism not fundamentally different from Tudeh's sudden change in attitude towards Khomeini when he began attacking it.

By 1979 the ICP was underground with hundreds of comrades executed and thousands in jail. Saddam was dubbed a "fascist" and his overthrow was called for. The Party now organises armed and industrial struggle against Saddam's bloody regime. But it does not seem to have broken consciously from the roots of the ideology which generated the errors of the seventies.

Although calling for Saddam's overthrow and an end to the war, the ICP does not take an unambiguous Leninist line for revolutionary defeatism, instead it raises the slogan of "ending the war on the basis of a just democratic peace based upon:

● Withdrawal of both countries' armies to the international borders before the war.

● Non-annexation of each others' territories.

● Respect of the two peoples' national sovereignty.

● Recognition of the right of each people to have the socio-political system of their choice and in accordance with their own free will." (Comrade U. Zaher of the ICP, *Morning Star* October 31 1986).

Though the ICP is clear that such a peace can only be obtained through the removal of Saddam and the Ba'athists, ambiguities are implicit in the phrasing above. More dangerously, alliances the ICP comrades choose for the overthrow of Saddam and ending this war, and by implication the nature of the state after such actions, are even more ambiguous.

The *Morning Star* of July 1982 reports an alliance between the ICP and the Shi'a al-Da'Wa organisation, which is pro-Khomeini. Such forces are not truly democratic or anti-imperialist and are, as the Tudeh Party has proven to its cost, the most dangerous of bed fellows. Today, the ICP has, unlike Tudeh, kept its revolutionary honour but its ideological outlook does not seem to be fundamentally different. Comrade Zaher in the above quoted *Star* article writes: "the Iraqi Communist Party and its allies in the Democratic Patriotic Front are in favour of a broad patriotic front comprising all patriotic parties, forces and trends; democratic, progressive nationalist and Islamic, which are opposed to the war and the dictatorship."

This is not dissimilar to the line advanced by Tudeh prior to the 1979 revolution. It is as dangerous. The clergy is a lethal ally and phrases such as "progressive nationalists" can cloak a multitude of sins. Crucially, comrade Zaher does not tackle the question of who will lead. No section of the bourgeoisie in Iran or Iraq can be consistently democratic. In the imperialist countries, in general terms, working class consent to the rule of the bourgeoisie can be secured through the crumbs of world robbery. In Iran, Iraq and similar countries this avenue is not open. Religion can be used to befuddle the masses, divide them and provide the regime with a legitimacy, but it is the state which is crucial. It is forced to play a much more open role, intervening in economic and social life, to maintain any degree of stability. This manifests itself in the much greater degree of repression these states are forced to use against the masses, who suffer much harsher forms of exploitation than in the imperialist countries.

Because exploitation of the masses, in particular the working class, is far more extreme, the proletariat is often 'forced' into revolutionary politics by sheer necessity. But if because of the tailism of the communists they are forced in behind a section of the bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeoisie, the end result will not resolve any of the initial problems, but only provide the working class with defeat and demoralisation. The fact is that the tasks of the democratic revolution can only be fulfilled under the leadership of the working class which establishes its own dictatorship.

Peace through Revolution

War between two self-proclaimed anti-imperialist states has caused no little confusion amongst the left internally and externally. Many, like common liberals, wring their hands in abject confusion as to the causes of the war:

"It is criminal to consider such a war as rational political behaviour ... In regions where roots for local conflicts are non-existent, imperialism creates them." (*World Marxist Review*, July 1983). Throughout the world communist movement, from Eurocommunist to oh-so-hard mainstream centrists, the theory of the war as some kind of dirty "imperialist plot" hatched in Washington has found favour. (As an aside, as the Soviet Union and the CPSU regard the war as senseless and lamentable, they have no justification in selling arms to both Iran and Iraq as they have done at various times during the war).

Historically, imperialism can be blamed for enforcing the unstable national structures in the Middle East and drawing off super-profits from the toiling masses in these countries. But whether imperialism is directly and immediately to blame is an altogether different question.

Iran and Iraq are not the equivalents to Namibia, El Salvador or Zaire. They are not examples of states which are simply dominated by foreign finance capitals with a weak or comprador bourgeoisie carrying through a proxy role for this or that major power. Iran and Iraq — medium level developed capitalist countries — have a degree of national autonomy not found in the more backward capitalist countries. Both have considerable concentrations of national monopoly capital, and consequently a need to expand, to export capital, to secure superprofits.

This is the only way that Iranian/Iraqi capitalists can realise a sufficient rate of profit. Iran has been exhibiting these needs since the

late 1960s when the Shah laid claim to Bahrain and parts of the United Arab Emirates as a province of Iran. In 1971, Iran annexed three islands of the UAE in the Gulf. Khomeini in his turn has used the 'Shi'a card' in an attempt to gain Middle Eastern markets and oil fields. It is no coincidence that land under claim by Iran should contain oil fields. Likewise, Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 was no 'imperialist plot' as many claim, but motivated by an iron necessity on the part of the Iraqi bourgeoisie to expand.

These states have national concentrations of monopoly capital which demand that they begin to export capital so as to continue capitalist accumulation. The problem arises with the existing domination of the imperialist powers who have a stronger, hegemonic position in the world market, allowing the capital of the medium developed capitalist countries no significant room for manoeuvre. So these countries have to opt for a (highly unsuccessful) route to export of capital — forced annexations and colonialism, such as Iraq attempted with the Shat-al-Arab waterway and Turkey has done with Northern Cyprus. As comrade Ayla Antepli of the Communist Party of Turkey — *Workers Voice* has pointed out:

"The fact is that any attempt to deny the reality of a high level of capitalist development in the Middle East, of the formation of monopolies, the emergence of powerful and mutually conflicting tendencies to expand abroad, and the state-sponsored growth of extreme nationalism and chauvinism, has led to a situation in which events such as the Iran-Iraq war can only be described as 'inexorable' or as the handiwork of outside forces, with a complete disregard for their local or regional significance." (*Turkey Today*, October/November 1984).

Both sides in the war have reactionary, expansionist aims, irrespective of who invaded whom in the first instance. Organisations such as the Trotskyite Workers Power and the Healyite WRP, who claimed in *News Line* that "the Iraqi regime has been fighting a proxy war on behalf of world imperialism" (May 22, 1984) exhibited the most crass liberalism when they supported Iran. They did so because Iran, poor things, were attacked first.

Revolutionary defeatism from the first shot onwards is the only Leninist stand. And defence of the Iranian regime against Iraq at any stage is against the interests of workers in both countries. More, it shows a total disregard for revolutionary history. Lenin in 1917, in opposition to Stalin and Kamanev, opposed any defence of the government of the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks and called for their overthrow, even when German troops were on Russian soil. And Khomeini is no 'Socialist Revolutionary', no Kerensky.

The Revolutionary Guards and Revolutionary Committees of the Khomeini government are not organs of revolutionary popular power, they are essentially clerical bourgeois organs of power which were first organised to replace some of the functions of the shattered state organs of the Shah's regime. But as well as these reactionary institutions the 1979 revolution also saw the emergence of organs which did have a genuinely revolutionary potential.

Workers' councils, or shuras, came into existence in many factories. Workers ran their own workplaces, and later followed additional 'wild cat' appropriations of private capital. But with a lack of political direction, the Khomeini regime was able to strangle these shuras. It is these, not the Khomeini fake anti-imperialist regime, which were the genuine potential organs of revolutionary power in Iran and could have been posed directly against the capitalist aims of Khomeini.

Support for them would have necessitated opposition to Khomeini, just as support for the soviets in Russia necessitated opposition to Kerensky. What Khomeini's revolution amounted to was a political revolution within the camp of the bourgeoisie, headed by the clergy and the national bazaar bourgeoisie. What the shuras represented was a proletarian state in embryo.

If communists in Iran had been able to organise and further publicise the shuras, it would have been an altogether different story. Instead they prostrated themselves before Khomeini and mortgaged their mass working class following to him. The Iraqi comrades were guilty of similar sins in the mid-1970s.

Tudeh could have led the 1979 revolution. The opportunities were there. The failure to do so resulted in the World War I style slaughter in the region today. The situation cries out for resolute, independent proletarian leadership standing in theory and practice for revolutionary defeatism and workers' power. As Khomeini, Saddam and the war have illustrated, nothing less will do.

Alan Merrik



TEACHERS

RANK AND FILE

■ *The Worker's Revolutionary Party (Workers Press) - now there's an organisation that never says 'die'. An organisation that went through a shattering split at the end of last year which has left it probably the most discredited organisation of the British left; that has recently had to sell up and move to "more suitable" (read "smaller") headquarters; who have had a sale of most of the 'Party's' technical equipment to bring in some ready; and whose ex-general secretary, Mike Banda, has denounced Trotskyism. Yet in the very same issue of Workers Press which first reported on Banda's change of heart, they also had another of their seemingly interminable trips down memory lane entitled 'Stalinism in Crisis'. That's it kids, keep your chins up...*

■ *Straight Leftist, NCP and CCG bigwigs hide their opportunism by attacking The Leninist as Trotskyite. For similar reasons Trotskyites brand us 'Stalinist'. For example News Line (of the Healy WRP) devoted two pages to denouncing Mike Banda, for daring to speak at the rally we organised to celebrate the October Revolution. Apparently because he did so he has "completely embraced Stalinism."*

■ *Wapping pickets will be interested to find out why News Line has not denounced Alex Mitchell who, until a few months ago, was the editor of this daily dose of poison. He now works in Australia for... you guessed it: Rupert Murdoch.*

■ *Derek Hatton may no longer be deputy leader of Liverpool City Council but he is busily carving himself out a lucrative career as the acceptable face of Militant. In November he visited, patriotic red poppy button hole and all, the CBI conference in Bournemouth. Asked by reporters whether bosses would be put off Liverpool by his reputation, he replied that many wanted to talk to him about investing in Liverpool because he was Derek Hatton. Clearly Hatton is as modest as he is militant.*

■ *The United States is still the land of opportunity. The Dominion Post, a West Virginian paper, carried an advert which read: "Earn \$185 by Christmas - start donating plasma today and meet your Christmas needs. This ad worth \$15 to new donors on first visit."*

AS THIS ARTICLE is being tapped into our word processor, members of the National Union of Teachers are yet to vote on the employers offer. Put another way, when you get to read this paper you will know the result; we can only guess at it. Nonetheless it is essential to comment now on the disgraceful role of the NUT executive and the continued disarray of the left.

The Acas pay and condition deal recommended by the NUT executive is a sellout.

- Head teachers will secure sweeping new powers to 'review', 'assess' and 'appraise' their staff.

- A wage rise that will leave teachers worse off than they were in 1974.

- Teachers will have to work more days each year.

- They will lose the ability to take industrial action short of striking and in general suffer tighter control over their work and lives.

Before the NUT entered talks under the auspices of Acas in the summer, the union leadership claimed it would do nothing to jeopardise its members' working conditions. Now it is claimed that after coming so far, having fought so hard for so long, the union membership must accept the Acas deal with all its faults or risk something far worse, i.e. Baker and his parliamentary legislation and the imposition of a new wage structure.

If the NUT had, as many militants argued, refused to take part in the Acas talks which specifically linked pay and conditions, if they had stuck to demanding a wage increase which at least kept up with inflation, then the present sorry state of affairs could have been avoided. Who can doubt that as soon as the NUT started to make concessions on conditions, or even agreed to talks on conditions, it opened a Pandora's Box.

The employers, and then Baker, correctly saw the NUT's concessions on conditions as a sign of weakness. They fully exploited this, shifting the centre of debate from the fact that teachers are low paid, to the need for teachers to be under a contractual obligation to cover and to do dinner duties.

Education Secretary Kenneth Baker's legislation and his abolition of the Burnham Committee (which negotiated teacher's pay) was designed, in no small part, to panic the NUT into ending the whole teachers' dispute. And in this he brilliantly succeeded.

Conference

But while the NUT leadership was cowed, a large section of the rank and file have not been. This was clearly seen at the NUT Special Salaries Conference in Blackpool on November 29.

Although many of the delegates had little time to fully absorb the full extent of the sellout which the NUT leadership had sown up with the Labourite local authority negotiators, there was a general gut reaction against it. Likewise, the majority of delegates instinctively did not like

the Acas document on appraisal. Acceptance was only won because the executive played on the deep fear teachers have of Baker. Using the argument of the lesser of two evils, comparing the Acas deal to Baker and conjuring up the prospect of an Orwellian state control over education, it was illogically, but successfully, argued that to oppose Baker one had to support the Acas package.

In reality, of course, there is not that much to choose between Baker and what has been agreed by the majority of teachers' unions under the auspices of Acas. Baker made this clear in parliament only days before the NUT conference. He admitted he agreed with most of the Acas deal, his only real bone of contention being the way the available money was to be distributed amongst various teachers grades.

Fortunately very many NUT delegates were not convinced by their executive's argument. Realising the executive was using Baker as a ploy to avoid its duty to fight, many voiced the determination of even 'moderate' (i.e. backward) areas to continue the struggle. Significantly the executive and the deal only won the day by a narrow margin. On a card vote the executive secured 122,557 and those against, 100,973. Armed with this far from clear mandate the executive recommended a 'yes' vote in the ballot.

Unfortunately the executive's victory was secured not only using the bogey of Baker, but with the help of communists determined not to be on the same side as the 'Trots'. Indeed it must be said that the opportunists in our Party played no small part in preventing the Acas deal being thrown out.

To get the result they wanted, the executive had to rely on many delegates voting against the wishes of their local associations or branches. The fact is that many of these delegates were Communist Party members. This, and the fact that such opportunists, like comrade Marian Dark and Jim Ferguson, took a lead in fighting for the deal, can only bring our Party into disrepute.

Teaching the Party

Under both the old style right opportunist leadership and the new Eurocommunist regime, the Communist Party has been seen to be on the right in the NUT. Interestingly, in defence of the Euros, there has been very little to distinguish them in practice from the centrist trends and factions.

The truth is that, despite discontent and even rebellion by certain rank and file elements, not only have the Euros supported the NUT executive but so have the Straight Leftists, NCPers and those around the *Morning Star*. They have all gone along with the bankrupt pro-executive policies of the Broad Left, using the excuse that unity, at any price, is essential against Baker.

In fact for all these opportunists,

the problem in teaching over recent decades has not been to overcome the middle class pretensions of those in the NAS/UWT, nor the stodgy reformism of the NUT leadership. No, the problem is the 'Trots', by which they mean any grouping or person to the left of them. And given their rightism, for them, the 'Trot' problem assumes giant proportions.

As we have said, leading Euros, CCGers, NCPers and Straight Leftists have solidly lined up against the very large militant minority in the NUT, have backed the deal and done their best to sell it. Yet many rank and file elements in these groupings, in the main ordinary teachers who do not move in executive circles, have rebelled against the NUT executive and their factional masters. The *Morning Star* grouping, in particular, has not been able to maintain anything approaching a united front.

In the *Morning Star* of November 19 Colin Williams, echoing the editorial line of supporting the executive, no matter what, reported the deal as being a "reasonable settlement". This has not gone unchallenged. Many pro-*Morning Star* teachers have been sickened by this line. Voicing this disgust Victor Adereth, a leading pro-*Morning Star* teacher, slammed the paper's editorial line on the Acas deal. According to Adereth "... many socialist teachers in the NUT, including many communists, are totally opposed to the 'agreement' because it is, quite simply, a sellout in the classic sense."

Adereth correctly argued that the union and the Labour controlled local authorities did not just agree to the Acas deal because of the threat of Baker, but to smooth Neil Kinnock's path to Number 10. When the *Morning Star* calls for "mass struggle" to get a Labour victory, Adereth asks plaintively, "why is the teachers case thought to be different?" (November 27, 1986) Why indeed.

The left

What about the 'Trots' so feared by our opportunists? How have they, or more correctly those who stand to the left of our opportunists, how have these forces handled themselves? The Local Association Pay Action Conference unites not only Trotskyites but all leftwing NUT branches. Meeting in early November it illustrated the weakness of the NUT left.

While on the positive side it agreed to improve links with the Scottish teachers in the EIS and college lecturers in NATFHE, as well as to lobby the Nottingham talks, that was about all that was decided.

Given the crucial stage of the struggle, such lethargy was criminal. Attack, attack should have been the motto. Talk of exam boycotts and unofficial strike action were, because of the SWP and the Socialist League, all left in mid air. This left the initiative with the union bureaucracy which, confronted with

Baker's parliamentary, will surely not have the bottle to fight. LAPAC has therefore proved incapable of posing any alternative to the cowardly NUT bureaucracy.

The key to opposing any sellout agreement will rest on the ability of the rank and file to organise unofficial industrial action. While there has been unofficial action, for example in Leicester, this has remained isolated. This is in no small part due to the retreat of SWP and Socialist League forces to the right.

This was well illustrated by leading SWP members at the LAPAC meeting. They pathetically queried the idea of writing to every school to call for action. This was, according to the 'ultra-left' SWP speakers, because it was either impossible or too expensive for the LAPAC. Of course, this puts the SWP firmly amongst those who adhere to the empirical school of the possible and not the revolutionary school of fighting for what is needed. Even the left reformist EIS leadership did exactly this as part of their campaign. But for the downturn SWPers such a basic form of campaigning is beyond the pale. Clearly the remaining influence of such SWP 'militants', far from being 'ultra-leftist', is conservative in the extreme and must be an important factor behind the present disarray in the ranks of teachers.

Nonetheless, as the militant minority at November's NUT conference showed, the will to fight is there. Edinburgh EIS has already called for strike action one day each week against Main. Even the 'moderate' NAS/UWT is calling half day strikes. So it is quite possible for a head of steam to be built up. But this will require the downturn SWPers and equally conservative Socialist League dominated Socialist Teachers Alliance being forced aside by a genuine fighting left.

If teachers are defeated it will affect all other local government unions. If the government imposes a deal on teachers it will undoubtedly go on to do the same to other workers. Already hints have been let drop about lecturers suffering the same fate.

The Tory's are out to batter the teachers' unions so they can launch a full scale attack on teachers and education for the working class. The NUT, NAS/UWT and EIS bureaucracies cannot lead a fightback. But there is no choice. It is either surrender to the rotten selling of conditions and open the way to a massive government offensive, or fightback. Support must be given to those associations refusing to operate the Acas deal. But there must also be offensive as well as defensive action. Certainly arguing for a return to strike action will be difficult but frankly there is no alternative.

Militants must organise throughout Britain. Rank and file, joint union committees should be established and a real fightback begun.

Tony Coughlin



PAMPHLET

Investing in British imperialism

The Labour Party, *Investing in People*, pp.24, £0.75p.

LENIN'S CHARACTERISATION of the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers party, carrying the bourgeois ideology of national chauvinism and class collaboration into the workers' movement, is well illustrated in this glossy advertising brochure for Labour.

With the Tory government's second term of office due to expire in 1988, a 1987 general election is on the cards. Militant workers might have expected a fighting call from Labour to raise mass struggle for working class needs against big business interests, to mobilise workers' votes for a Labour government to end capitalism and start to build socialism. This, however, is not Labour's aim. It seeks to manage capitalism better than the Tories, to damp down class struggle and to line up British workers behind British finance capitalists, against foreign workers and bosses.

Half the pamphlet is taken up with photographs, each with the caption "Labour" and a pink rose — perhaps to symbolise that Labour is something nice?

The front cover carries a portrait of caring Kinnock, and the back shows a happy, smiling working class family with which the voters can identify. Inside, every page has the heading "Investing in..." something — people, Britain, jobs, industry, skills, children, the elderly, health, the environment, opportunities for all, safer communities — while the last page is headed "Investment is Efficient". Each page of text is faced by a full page portrait of a complacent, happy, satisfied, Labour-voting working class person. No picture of a miners' picket, a Wapping printers' march or an anti-apartheid rally. These workers are not activists of any kind. They just want to be allowed to get on with their work for their boss!

The pamphlet highlights the problem of mass unemployment, decaying industry, declining housing standards, overstrained health and education services, poverty amongst pensioners, and record levels of crime. But instead of blaming Britain's social problems on the capitalist system, and calling for class struggle to end it once and for all, Labour blames Tory government neglect in failing to invest in industry, public services and education.

Instead of proposing the usual reformist nostrum of public ownership to make possible socialist planning of the economy, Labour sets itself the task of planning the capitalist economy, through a new British Investment Bank, British Enterprise, local Enterprise Boards and Regional Development Agencies.

British Enterprise will encourage new developments by financing new companies and production processes, and acting as a "public

stake-holder", while the British Investment Bank will provide long term loans to British industry. "Investment institutions" (god forbid that the "capitalist class" should make an appearance anywhere in this pamphlet) will be persuaded to invest in Britain by the lure of tax relief, although this method hardly seems likely to counteract the enormous profitability of overseas investments. According to the pamphlet, overseas investments amounts to over £95 billion.

Whilst promising "new laws and policies to combat racism", the pamphlet does not even mention capitalism, let alone recognise the imperialist nature of British finance capital in exploiting workers around the world, a practice for which racist ideology provides the justification. Labour's plan to make British imperialism more profitable is incompatible with comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa, so this matter is conveniently omitted.

Indeed, the examples held up for Britain to emulate are other capitalist-imperialist countries — Japan, France and (Federal) Germany — where state intervention has been used to promote industrial modernisation. The fact that this comparison is not used to legitimise a massive reduction in British arms expenditure to Japanese, French or German levels, says everything about Labour's imperialist intentions. Disarmament and peace are not mentioned.

"Every extra person thrown out of work costs Britain an extra £6,000 a year in unemployment benefit, lost taxes and contributions." The terrible waste of unemployment is to be overcome by "wise investment", by Labour's "programme to reduce registered unemployment by one million over two years." This rotten promise to the unemployed, to leave at least 2½ million of them on the scrap heap two whole years after the election of the "democratic socialist vision" government, is perhaps the most telling phrase in the whole pamphlet, for it stunningly expresses the impossibility of meeting the needs of the working class within the confines of today's capitalism.

The word "socialist" appears only once, in the "democratic socialist vision of the Labour Party" which foresees "a country where individual liberty and social justice are based on a solid foundation of economic prosperity." The previous Labour government of Wilson and Callaghan started out in 1974 with promises to shift the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families, but ended up doubling unemployment and attacking working class living standards with the social contract/con-trick and the 1978/9 "winter of discontent". This time round the promises leave more to be desired, and the reality, as always, can be expected to fall far short of the promises.

Instead of class struggle against capitalism, for British workers "there is just hard work and iron purpose." "We're going to have to work our way out of the mess that the Tories leave."

The real aim of the "democratic socialist vision" is the prosperity, not of British workers, but of British capitalist-imperialism. This is to be achieved through "a partnership between employers, workers, trade unions and local communities", united in struggle against "our foreign competitors".

So it's noses to the grindstone and shoulders to the wheel to back bosses' Britain — and, when the time comes, we'll be more than ready to follow Labour's lead and fight the foreign foe!

Ian Farrell



BOOK

Journalistic hall of mirrors

Martin Adeny and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike*, RKP, pp.319 £14.95.

"130,000 men sitting at home quarrelling with their wives; of people who found themselves first on strike, to their bewilderment, and then unable or too frightened to go back; of men afraid to discuss the merits of the strike in case they were overheard and accused of being scabs; of shopkeepers gladly giving money and supplies, and others who paid up simply for fear of their windows being broken."

The same wickedly distorted view was presented by the media in general during the strike, and now, in this new book by BBC journalist Adeny, and Lloyd, the then industrial editor of the *Financial Times* (and now editor of the *New Statesman*), we have it presented again, this time in the apparent shape of 'an analysis'.

The attack on capitalism is, in the authors' view, an attack upon society and its values, workers going on strike is a betrayal of trust, the NUM will never recover because it "has forfeited national trust in its ability to deliver coal regularly" and our failure to provide our labour solely on the terms of the employers means we "cannot hope again to command pride of place in the labour movement."

The miners suspected right the way through the strike that the Tories and their admirers were seeking revenge for the previous defeats inflicted on them by the miners and also trying to undermine our position in the vanguard of the labour movement. This book is shot through with the undercurrent of satisfaction that the miners got their come-uppance as they were previously "... together under a single employer, cosseted, and flattered by the labour movement to believe in its own unique fraternity."

The book is broadly sympathetic to the aims of the NCB under

MacGregor and regards the man in terms similar to those with which he would regard himself: "A surprising ability ... to get through to the shopfloor on an individual basis ... he was able to talk on the same level as a worker." Of course, such a nice guy plotted no conflict with the miners; the authors tell us there was no plan. (MacGregor's recent book says quite the opposite, as does the Ridley Report on the Government Misc 57 committee, which met between the period of the 1981 back down and the 1984-5 Great Strike). Despite all the recommendations, the contingencies, the tactical withdrawals, the brain storming of the 57 committee to draw up plans for the new battle, the authors insist there was no plot. All of the deliberations of the 57 committee, it seems, were coincidental academic exercises.

There is an *a priori* 'reasoning' in this book that a trade union which seeks to defend its members is somehow doing something wrong: "Not surprisingly, *The Miner*, under Jones' editorship instantly screwed up its pitch and launched itself against the Board and the government", (my emphasis). Isn't that what an NUM paper should do?

When it comes to actual descriptions of the strike, there is not the slightest question which side this book is on. The miners, we are told, were responsible for their violence and the violence of the police, because we provoked it. Their alleged 'insights' into the picketing operation include not one interview with any of the people who coordinated it, and are actually nothing more than wild speculation and restatement of the press commentary at the time. Their account of how area agents picked the targets each day is the closest, though still inaccurate, version of events.

There are serious omissions of significant events. For example, the enormous and almost violent arguments between Area officials and the Doncaster picket coordinators over directions, tactics and funding of pickets is given just 4½ lines, all of which are on the wrong tack entirely. The authors lift wholesale the ultra-left myth that the rank and file, organised by one 'revolutionary' body or another, forced the Executive in Yorkshire to picket Nottingham. In fact, the EC had plans to picket Nottingham but wished to be sure that Yorkshire was solid first. They had the picket or standby for the first day. The miners at Armthorpe got bored with waiting, rounded up our troops and crossed into Nottingham. Two members of the Armthorpe branch are in the SWP, but there the relationship to the truth ends. Similarly, they credit the WRP with

an influence they do not have, especially after they set up Arthur at the TUC conference with the Polish 'Solidarity' affair. After that, they were chased out of the Doncaster pit communities! The picket target nicknamed 'A Bridge Too Far' was at Immingham, not at Orgreave as the book states. The Immingham bridge was in fact the bridge picketed by Hatfield miners throughout the strike, where they succeeded in stopping all fuel and iron ore taken by rail to the Scunthorpe Steel works.

We are treated to long statements from police officers giving their version of events, often without quotation marks, so the statement of the officer is seen as the statement of the book, made without criticism or comment. There is not a single quote from any of the multitude of books and pamphlets written by the mining communities themselves and which accurately express the feelings of the pit communities. The only statement from miners come a year after the strike at Edlington pit, where cynicism and redundancy fever have conspired to close the pit without a fight. From the tens of thousands of others, there is nothing. However, just for 'balance' there are frequent statements from the NCB and the government.

The truth is that no primary research has been done on this book, except to look down the journalistic hall of mirrors and quote from various distorted images. This fact is borne out in their two page coverage of the Armthorpe siege, which is based entirely on police accounts and makes no mention whatsoever of the police riot the day before in the neighbouring village of Stainforth. The fact that police beat people mercilessly and indiscriminately and were 'out of control' was upheld by the Police Complaints Authority! Yet Lloyd and Adeny do not even see fit to mention it!

This book apologises for Thatcher, defends scabbing, talks lyrically about the police and the NCB, and coos about the rise of the right in the Labour and trade union movement. It denigrates the struggle of the men, women and children in the mining communities, it mocks working class idealism and principles and, of course, saves its bitterest poison for Arthur Scargill.

At Mick McGahey's retirement party this year, Lloyd got up and begged the trade unions to take their profession seriously "as Mick had done." That this man is given house room at any social or political event of the left, following a repugnant book like this, is an outrage. This book is inaccurate, politically incorrect, distorted and costs £14.95: it should be a good seller at Tory Party conferences.

Dave Douglass

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HOT AIR: NO

THE QUESTION of South Africa is on everyone's lips. Because of the heroism, the refusal of the black masses in South Africa to be ruled in the old way the Anti-Apartheid Movement now has a genuine mass movement behind it.

In Britain ten years ago anti-apartheid protests were counted in thousands. Now they are counted in tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands. Because of this groundswell the AAM is at a crossroads.

It can carry on along the CND-road of organising pop concerts and trying to pressurise the government to impose sanctions by using trade union officials, the yearly ritual mass demonstrations and establishment figures. This is a highway paved with good intent, but is ultimately doomed to disappointment because it will not, and cannot, go beyond the safe contours of bourgeois respectability.

We say the fighting masses of South Africa need solidarity of the highest form. This path has its risks, not least the risk of losing fair weather friends in the establishment, but what the black masses need is a Hands Off Russia type campaign, a campaign of solidarity blacking based on working class solidarity, strength and militancy, not parliamentary pressure politics.

During periods of relative quietness inside South Africa the AAM rightly concentrated its efforts on what could be called patient diplomatic work. The needs of the liberation movement for safe havens, friends in high places, and cultivating democratic opinion had to and did take priority.

But all methods of work have their time and place. The situation today cries out for a far more militant approach. Indeed what is needed is the junking of the petty, bureaucratic obsession with doing down the protest politics of the RCG and the City Group. What is needed is mass involvement, not constitutional straight jacketing and trade union block votes. In fact, what is needed is not only more mass demonstrations and a real mass membership of the AAM, but anchoring the whole solidarity movement on the working class. Only in this way can genuine solidarity be delivered, solidarity that has real clout; and who can doubt that is what is needed today.

This does not mean the sycophantic worshipping of the official movement as Simon Sapper, the retiring trade union officer of the AAM, has indulged in. Far from it. The official movement is good on words, lousy on real action. It has a pathetic record of solidarity with the black masses in South Africa. Remember when Botha imposed a state of emergency? The TUC big wigs could only plead to Thatcher for the umpteenth time to save Britain's honour by imposing sanctions.

In the same way, during the Commonwealth mini-summit on South Africa the TUC predictably organised a token picket calling for Thatcher to act. This buck-passing in the end produced the obscurity of a TUC 'fact finding' mission to South Africa. Thus as Botha's goons were rounding up thousands of trade unionists and democrats the TUC responded by going to South Africa — all part of its moral campaign to get Thatcher to do something to save Britain's standing.

TUC hot air

This 'solidarity' is more than pathetic, it is an insult to all trade

unionists, all fighters for liberation, indeed to all blacks in South Africa, and the AAM should never have allowed the TUC to get away with such an approach. It should have voiced criticism in no uncertain terms. Thatcher is Botha's most important ally. British imperialism laid the foundations for apartheid and is today the leading investor in South Africa. This means British workers have a particular responsibility to fight for their class brothers and sisters in South Africa.

No wonder when Cyril Ramophose and James Motatsi, the leaders of the South African NUM, visited Britain, they pulled no punches. "The British people as a nation have done nothing to assist us in achieving our liberation." As to the TUC: "When it comes to South Africa" said Ramophose "we have always seen the British TUC vacillate and unable to make a right decision, holding back and not sticking out, and going many steps backwards." Most importantly he insisted: "if the 'honourable' Mrs Thatcher will not impose sanctions, then the working class in Britain must."

This is our position. What about the AAM? Has it called for the TUC's affiliates to follow the lead of the Dunnes strikers, Nupe members in Portsmouth and Aberdeen seamen? No, these and countless other such actions have been reported in *The Leninist* but have often not even been mentioned in *Anti-Apartheid News*. Has the AAM set up working meetings to organise a trade union boycott of trade with apartheid? No, Simon Sapper has shown himself far more concerned with trade union officialdom, functionaries like Ron Tood, than actual workers. Has the AAM agitated for strike action to force Thatcher's hand on sanctions? No, such a perspective is laughed at as 'ultra-leftist'.

As to the TUC, in the face of the AAM leadership's refusal to criticise it in public, its 'solidarity' has if anything taken another step back. It spent thousands of pounds advising trade union trustees on pension funds to urge disinvestment from South Africa. Like greedy capitalists in the Thatcherite mould its case was that South Africa is a "bad investment". So, instead of taking a lead and winning workers in Britain to impose their own sanctions, as asked for by the leaders of workers in South Africa, the TUC set itself up as an advisory panel for monopoly capitalism.

Surely the AAM should criticise the TUC when it can project as solidarity the going into the pros and cons of exploiting South African workers with the bosses of some of the City's biggest institutions. Surely the AAM should be demanding the TUC do its utmost to deliver the sort of solidarity workers in South Africa are rightly demanding. The AAM should bluntly tell the TUC that if it prefers impotent pleas with Thatcher and hobnobbing with the "key investment decision makers" to action doubt must be cast on its claims to stand with the black masses.

Perhaps the TUC leaders, the AAM should say, dread workers in Britain actively siding with the revolution in South Africa just as much as Thatcher's Cabinet? Certainly a revolution in South Africa would be a body blow to capitalism in Britain, and as good patriots and loyal subjects of the queen, is this something Willis and other blustering bureaucrats want to see, let alone support?

But whatever the AAM leadership says, militant workers, friends of



Archbishops and MPs: fair weather friends

WORKERS SANCTIONS

YES

the black masses in South Africa, must not pass the buck to the trade union bureaucrats as the bureaucrats pass the buck to the Tories. The situation in South Africa demands action by workers in Britain now, not when we have persuaded the TUC to do something. This does not mean we should ignore the TUC, prematurely try to circumvent it. We can and must demand decisive action from the TUC. But our best method of persuasion on TUC fat cats is exactly the same as we should employ on the government — working class power.

Follow their lead

We must win workers to take their lead, not from the TUC, but from the Dunnes strikers, the Portsmouth health workers and all other groups who have taken action against trade with apartheid. These actions must be the starting point for those who really wish to deliver solidarity to the heroic black masses in South Africa.

Whatever happens at the AAM's AGM over January 10-11 we will continue our fight for workers' sanctions. We will answer the bureaucrats and their hot air with rank and file initiative and direct action. We will fight to force the TUC to follow those imposing workers' sanctions and fight to answer government support for Botha with a general strike demanding comprehensive sanctions. We will immediately fight for the following programme of action:

- Draw working class militants and working class organisations into the local branches of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Form workplace AAM groups.
- Involve and forge links with local black organisations.
- Research and then publish lists of South African links, trade and goods used by local employers.
- Organise delegations of local trade unionists and supporters of the South African liberation movement to all union organisations in these

workplaces.

- AAM branches should form local Action Committees to coordinate the blacking of trade with apartheid. These should as quickly as possible be based on elected and recallable delegates from trade union branches, unemployed workers' groups, trades councils, shop stewards committees and all working class organisations.

- Tours should be laid on for Sactu and other South African trade union speakers in every city and town, especially to workplaces, explaining the case for workers' sanctions.

- The rank and file will act if the TUC won't.

- Make conference pledges to the ANC and Sactu real.

- No more TUC hot air.

- General strike to force Thatcher's hand.

- For working class supervised comprehensive sanctions against apartheid.

Jack Conrad

SUPPLEMENT



GOD ON OUR SIDE?

HISTORICALLY Marxism has always been directly opposed to the idealistic mists of religion, counterposing the church's mysticism with the scientific theory of dialectical and historical materialism. Nevertheless it is ever more obvious that there is a growing softness amongst the ranks of communists towards religion. This softness takes various forms but one thing is certain, it covers a broad spectrum of the communist movement.

The Eurocommunists are perhaps the most overt cassocked communists. These church cheerleaders see the clergy as having a decisive role to play in the broad democratic alliance against Thatcher, not least because their idea of fighting the Tories takes the form of a moral crusade, rather than class war.

Time and time again class militancy has been shunned by the Euros in their rush for respectability. The People's March for Jobs in 1983 was the tip of the pro-Church iceberg; Pete Carter, industrial organiser of the Party, proclaimed the object of this march to be to build the "broadest possible alliance ... from bishops to brickies, from non-Thatcherite Tories to revolutionary socialists". It is hardly surprising that this philosophy led to the

expulsion of youths from the march on the grounds of chanting anti-Tory slogans.

The miners' strike of 1984-5 provided an even better platform for the Euros to throw red flags to the wind in favour of trailing on the hems of the mauve-suited bishops. With the Lord on their side they could gleefully condemn the nasty macho violent miners while at the same time pleading for charitable donations to them.

The strike was an embarrassment to the Euros, redeemed only by the involvement of their respectable friends. Thus, for example, in South Wales they set up the 'Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities', which was an attempt to pull into the strike the chapel and church, with the general tin-rattling intention of making the miners into objects of charity rather than solidarity.

Indeed, even at the end of the strike, the leadership of both the Scottish and Welsh NUM, under the influence of NUM Euros, insisted on drawing in clerics to campaign for the re-instatement of sacked miners rather than launch a serious militant campaign for all sacked and jailed miners.

So endeth the first lesson from the pulpit of *Marxism Today*. But what of the supporters of the supposed 'modern day *Iskra*', the *Morning*

Star? This beacon in the revolutionary wilderness is not to be outdone by the 'opportunistic', 'revisionist' leadership of the Party which it so condemns; it too puts in its bid for holy orders. To be sure, Tony Chater must have been bathing in holy water each day, to judge by his editorials and headlines, especially during the miners' strike: "A bishop of courage and compassion"; "Bishop backed against cabinet"; "MP's scorn church advice"; "Bishop attacks Tory"; "I'll continue to speak out — miners row bishop".

Bishop Tony of Farringdon Road was unstinting in his praise for the good works of the church in the miners' strike. (Yes, we remember it well. Charity-mongering apart, the boys with the dog-collars were vocal in the strike: condemning miners' violence and denouncing Scargill for organising 'Stalinist style intimidation'). But no matter, what is important to these pseudo-revolutionaries is not telling the church where to get off in its attempts to maintain the status quo; no, what is important is the holy grail of the *British Road to Socialism*, "the key is to mobilise this reservoir of support into political action in a broad democratic alliance" (*Morning Star*, September 24 1984).

This so-called communist editor would rather falsify Marx than renounce the *British Road*, in fact he has to falsify Marx to defend the BRS broad democratic alliance. In an editorial in the *Morning Star* of April 15 1985, entitled "Bishop grasps the nettle", it is boldly stated:

"On the one hand, he [Marx] said, religion could be viewed as the opium of the people ... But then there is the other aspect which Marx also recognised when he referred to religion as being the sign of the oppressed ... It is to be found in the revolutionary defiance of Mary's Magnificat, where she sings with joy of the way God has chose a lowly working woman to bear his Son".

This is indeed a miraculous interpretation of what Marx actually wrote:

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." (*Early Writings*).

Seen in its context it is obvious that Marx did not have an "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" approach to religion, but his point was that the end result of all religion is to disarm the oppressed.

Chater, however, twisted Marx's words to justify support for the 'progressive' clergy. But what about the self-proclaimed 'tankies' of the Party? Those steely-eyed brave men and women who are committed to attack all signs of Western degeneracy — the supporters of *Straight Left* and *Communist* — surely they stand steadfast against the blessed? Well, generally the answer is "yes", when you can get these shrinking violets to comment (in private conversation — they remain silent in print). However, this is not out of ideological firmness but more a reflex action. When it comes to it they are full of ideological holes.

An example of this is their attitude to liberation theology. Try as you might, you are unlikely to find a Straight Leftist who will knock it. It is an emotive subject, and centrists, even 'hard line' ones, respond to it in this way: priests are fighting against reactionaries in order to help the oppressed of these countries and sometimes this means helping and fighting alongside communists. Conclusion: liberation theology is a good thing. But for genuine Marxists this cannot be enough.

The church knows that religion and Marxism are not compatible, and so do the advocates of liberation theology. As one partisan put it, "the two become tragic lovers whose only solution is suicide". The question is, do the revolutionary priests renounce their robes and become communists, or do the communists renounce materialism and join with god?

It is a mistake to think that because some priests in Latin America are not anti-communist, communists and clergy can forget their differences. Ultimately the two ideologies come into conflict. It is the job of communists in Latin America, whether they are helped by priests or not, to win the masses to communism, not to prolong their faith in the idealism of religion, nor indeed to become subsumed by it.

Communists have indeed gone soft on religion, have given it a socialist face, but as Marx and Engels noted in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the state? Has it not preached, in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church? Christian Socialism is but the

holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat ..."

A leopard does not change its spots; the church's role is the same as it was in Marx's time, as we shall go on to show.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

The essence of religion is idealism; the essence of Marxism is dialectical and historical materialism. Those who consider that nature — matter — is primary and that thought, spirit, or idea is the property of matter, belong to the camp of materialism. Those who maintain that thought, spirit or idea existed before the matter and that matter is, in one way or another, the creation of spirit and dependent upon it, belong to the camp of idealism.

In our practical day-to-day life most of us do not doubt that the objects around us and the phenomena of nature exist independently of our consciousness. The spontaneous materialism "of any healthy person who has not been an inmate of a lunatic asylum or a pupil of the idealist philosophers", Lenin wrote, "consists in the view that things, the environment, the world, exist independently of our sensations, or our consciousness, of ourselves, and of man in general".

For centuries the church has preached contempt for earthly life on the one hand and, on the other, fear of the omnipresent spirit of creation personified in god. It taught people, but especially the oppressed, that their destiny was to work and pray, that happiness was unattainable in this 'vale of tears', that it could only be achieved in heaven, as the reward of the obedient and meek. Those who dared challenge the divinely established rule of the exploiters were threatened with the wrath of god and torment in hell.

Marxist materialist philosophy, however, gives us the power to break free of all superstition. It teaches us not to look for fulfilment beyond the grave, but to prize life on earth and strive to improve it. Marxist materialism gives the human race the realisation of its dignity and intellect, proclaiming that it is nature's supreme creation, capable of mastering the forces of nature and making them serve humanity.

Christians, including those professing liberation theology often say Marxism has its points but is cold, inhuman and cynical. This is ironic. It is religion that is the philosophy of gloom and suffering. It is religion, not Marxist materialism, that denies humanity's ability to acquire knowledge and preaches distrust in science. It is religion, not Marxist materialism, that extols the cult of death. It is religion that has always proved a welcome home for the most abhorrent manifestations of anti-humanism — such as racism and fascism.

Religion refuses to accept the reality of the material world, proclaiming it secondary or unreal, and advancing instead an imagined, non-material heaven. In contrast, Marxist materialism gives us a true picture of the world, without any supernatural frills in the shape of god, the creator of the world, and so on. Marxist materialists do not need aid from supernatural forces. Their faith is in humanity, in its ability to transform the world by its own efforts. Marxist materialism is in its very essence an optimistic philosophy, whose supporters look to the future without fear and are not tormented by doubts of the justice of their cause.

ILLUSION AND REALITY

Idealist ideology is not simply a question of indoctrinating people with illusory ideas. It is a question of existing social relations continually generating illusions, and of these illusions serving definite material interests.

The gods which people create for themselves in their ideas are never, in the last analysis, anything other than a reflection of the real world of society, of the social relations within which people live their earthly lives. The world of the gods, of the supernatural, ends serving particular social interests. The tribal religion stands guard over, and protects, tribal relations,

just as the ideas of Christianity today stand guard over the bourgeois order of society. Marx was able to explain this process:

"The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas; i.e. the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production." (*The German Ideology*).

Illusion, however, always reflects the real social relations in society, however disguised this may be. For example, the religious ideology of the Middle Ages reflected the feudal order, the idea of a 'Great chain of being' in which the social hierarchy of god, kings, bishops, lords, freemen and serfs was held to be the rule of god. Thus the exploitation of the serf by the lord was disguised as a subordination of the serf to his natural superiors under the rule of god. Similarly, the naked fact that the feudal lord appropriated the produce of the serf's labour was disguised by the abstract feudal ideas of ownership, dues, rights and obligations.

Once again, the naked fact that the capitalist appropriates the value produced by the workers' unpaid labour is disguised by the abstract capitalist ideas of ownership, contract and equality of rights. This disguise is reinforced by capitalist forms of religion. Hence the Catholicism which was dominant in the western feudal world suffered a decline at the hands of Protestantism.

Individualistic Protestantism, with its stress on the freedom of men and women to worship in their own fashion, and on the individual having their own personal relationship with god, fitted in with the individualistic ideology of the rising bourgeoisie. "For a society based upon the production of commodities", wrote Marx, "in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour — for such a society, Christianity, with its cults of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, deism, etc, is the most fitting form of religion." (*Capital*, Volume I).

NOT AN INCH

Thus we see that the disguise and deception inherent in all ideological illusion always serves definite social ends, definite social interests. It is a powerful enemy, and to beat it the working class vanguard needs the most scientific theory. It must not give an inch to idealism. Lenin made this very clear in *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*, where he fought the slightest watering down of dialectical materialism by Bogdanov et al. Far from this being one of the more obscure and irrelevant of Lenin's works, as some ignoramuses may claim, it is an extremely valuable example of both how idealism can find its way into the communist movement, and of just how important an uncompromising materialist approach is at all times.

Lenin wrote this pamphlet in response to a wave of idealism that swept the Social Democratic movement after the failure of the 1905 revolution. Bogdanov, Bazarov and Lunacharsky entered into a bloc with Mensheviks Valentinov, Yushkevich and others, to promote the ideas of Ernst Mach, the eminent physicist, who had lately turned his attention to the realm of philosophy and come up with a theory known as empirio-criticism.

The word 'empirio' simply means 'experience' or 'experimental'. In this philosophical system only experience exists, only the facts of experience, 'critically purified' of everything which is alien, of everything which is not given in this experience, exist. Science, according to this philosophy, is a system of pronouncements combining into one non-contradictory complex of elements of 'our experience'. This logic made any mind which was subordinated to it completely blind to the contradictions of reality standing before it; blind to the contradictions of the most realistic facts in the sphere of material relations between the classes.

The materialist dialectic of Marx directs the thinking of the revolutionist toward an analysis of these contradictory relations. The idealist metaphysics of Mach turned their attention

away from such an analysis. Lenin clearly saw that a revolutionist who had adopted such a logic of thought would inevitably be transformed into some kind of capricious creature, ignoring the real contradictions of life, and trying to foist his own arbitrary will upon it.

Thus the Machists sought to build an earthly revolutionary equivalent to god. This led Bogdanov and others to idolise technology, and in their eyes the engineering and technological intelligentsia began to resemble a special caste of holy servants of this new divinity. They therefore began to understand socialism, not as an historically developed method of resolving real class contradictions, not as a revolutionary means of resolving material and objective contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but as a certain type of mathematically uncontradictory schema which is imposed from without on the 'chaos' of actual relations between people. Lenin had sharp words for this type of attitude to revolution:

"... if history had only led up to it as peacefully, quietly, smoothly and punctually as a German express train approaches the station. The proper conductor opens the doors of the car and proclaims: 'Station of the Socialist Revolution. Alle aussteigen (everyone out!)'"

Bogdanov and others led astray by this god-building philosophy were doubtless genuine revolutionaries but they suffered from being unable to recognise any tactical detours to this goal and they weren't capable of seeking them out. Within the bounds of the natural science experience which Bogdanov and his co-thinkers possessed, no room could be found for a subject such as a country which was involved in the process of capitalist development, in a process which had deposited its own, new and specific, contradictions of development on the old, well-known and still unresolved contradictions of before.

The mind which had been formed on an analysis of particular scientific and technological problems, and which had been directed to the resolution of these problems, gave up and was lost before the picture that was so complex, extremely differentiated, and yet unified. In particular, this was patently revealed when the problem on the agenda was the drawing of the lessons from the defeat of the revolution of 1905. When the revolution had been drowned in blood, the demand for Machist philosophy grew much stronger. Times of reaction take a heavy toll, the disappointment of revolutionary hopes is a terrible thing.

The point is that deviations towards idealism do not just come in the obvious forms of religion but in more subtle forms which must be equally combated as part of the same thing, the same idealistic disease. "God-seeking differs from God-building or God-creating or God-making, etc, no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil", wrote Lenin, "... any idea of any God at all, any flirtation even with a God, is the most inexpressible foulness ..."

REVOLUTIONARY RELIGION?

The modern gods are foul indeed, but are religious ideas by definition reactionary? Historically the answer must be no. Both progressive and reactionary classes and forces have used religion. Indeed, early Christianity was an example of the struggle of an oppressed class against its oppressor.

Jesus himself was almost certainly a leader of Jewish resistance against the power of Rome. After his death his followers went on to become a significant sect within Judaism. The Nazarenes, unlike other communistic Jewish sects, proselytised and soon won many adherents from Jewish and non-Jewish proletarian elements throughout the Roman empire, not least in Rome itself. Such people were ready for the communistic message of the Nazarenes, with their belief in the imminent divine destruction of the Roman Empire and the end of poverty.

As the Nazarene sect of Judaism quickly spread throughout the Roman empire, winning both gentile and Jew, some Greek recruits led by Paul began to give Jesus the status of a god. This eventually led to a great split about the year 60 AD, and a bitter struggle which took place over the following ten years. The Paulinist victory was determined by the Jewish war of independence in which most of the Nazarenes fought and perished, while the Paulinists ran for cover and, in an effort to distance

themselves from the Jews, re-wrote the gospel. As well as the re-writers turning the Jewish rebel Jesus into a Roman-loving mystic, as time went on strenuous efforts were made to make the Christian religion acceptable to the increasing number of rich recruits. Indeed Christianity did not just win the adherence of the rich and powerful, but became an ideological weapon used by the oppressors.

Christianity triumphed only when it was transformed into the opposite of its original character. The victory of Christianity was not the victory of the poor and oppressed, but of the clergy which supported the imperial power, slavery, and the concentration of wealth in a few hands. So Christianity was not always a force for reaction. The fact that it became a state religion is an example of inversion, the turning of the tables.

But it is essential for Marxists to understand that the working class has an historical mission which can only be carried out with heads free of all mystical booze. Religion is alien to the interests of the working class. Unlike the popular classes of the past — the slaves, the ancient proletarians, the peasantry — the working class will become the ruling class. The working class is the first class not historically interested in perpetuating class society; it is the only class which has no interest in coming to power and then perpetuating its own rule by retreating into reactionary (justifying) ideology, which is the function religion has always played for those that win power in class society.

This means that religious ideas are a barrier to the working class's historical mission for the abolition of class society. While slaves, ancient proletarians, peasants and the rising bourgeoisie have used religion for revolutionary ends, the modern working class needs the most rounded, consistent and militant scientific outlook to achieve communism.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Given that the working class outlook must be the most scientific, is it correct to assume that religion will naturally wither away with the advance of science? Unfortunately it is not as simple as that. Science provides the basis of much of modern culture and production, it has opened up the secrets of the universe to mankind. Yet there is no way that it has automatically or spontaneously replaced religious beliefs.

The reason for this is that religion is not just a product of ignorance, but of cognition itself, of the way we think about the world. As we saw earlier, Mach was an accomplished physicist, but his understanding of this natural science did not enable him to understand the contradictions in society from a materialist perspective. In this sphere he was reduced to idealism. As long as mankind cannot understand the alien force which seems to control their lives, mysticism will raise its head.

It is clear that god is made on earth by men and women. It is not, as religion likes to imagine, the other way round. Religion is a reflection of those external forces which control people's daily lives. In the beginnings of history it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected, in the form of sun-worship, for example, and in the course of further evolution these natural forces underwent manifold personifications among the various peoples of the world.

But it was not long before, side by side with the forces of nature, social forces began to be active which confronted people as equally alien as nature and, at first, equally inexplicable, dominating them with the same apparent natural necessity as the forces of nature themselves. The supernatural figures of worship, which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature, at this point acquired social attributes. At a still further stage of evolution, all the natural and social forces of the numerous gods were transformed to one almighty god, who is a reflection of abstract mankind.

In this convenient, handy and universally adaptable form, religion can continue to exist as the emotional form of people's relation to the alien natural and social forces which dominate them, as long as men remain victims of these forces.

Thus, we know that in existing bourgeois society people are dominated by economic conditions which they themselves

have created, by means of production which they themselves have produced, as if by alien force. The actual basis of the reflective activity that gives rise to religion therefore continues to exist, and with it the religious reflection itself. And although bourgeois political economy has given a certain insight into the causal connection of this alien domination, this makes no essential difference. Bourgeois economics can neither prevent crises in general, nor protect the individual capitalists from losses, bad debts and bankruptcy, nor secure the individual workers against unemployment and destitution. It is still true that man proposes and god (that is, the alien domination of the capitalist mode of production) disposes.

"Fear made the gods", wrote Lenin, "Fear of the blind force of capital — blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people — a force which at every step in the life of the proletariat and small proprietor threatens to inflict, and does inflict 'sudden', 'unexpected', 'accidental' ruin, destruction, pauperism, prostitution, death from starvation — such is the root of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost. If he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist." (CW, Vol 15).

It is true that the main churches report declining attendance, that religion is retreating in the face of science. But this is only a facet of the truth. It does not take into account many other factors which demonstrate the flexibility of idealism.

Take the mushrooming of all manner of mystical doctrines, such as astrology, spiritualism, and parapsychology. Is it not mortifying, in this technological age of ours, to find pages of popular women's magazines given over to queries such as this: "I am a Goat married to a Tiger, but I'm definitely the dominating one. My Tiger is quite happy to let me do all the organising, and I admit I do enjoy it ... I would have thought that a Tiger was stronger than a simple Goat". The pages continue pleading for direction from these horoscopes: 'should we move house?'; 'should we get engaged?'; 'are my husband and I compatible?'. But do not delude yourselves that it is only backward women that are attracted to this sort of ideas. Market research has shown that out of twenty-five regular features in newspapers, horoscopes come somewhere in the top five — often in the top two. Astrology also has its adherents on the Stock Exchange, of all places, where the planetary movements are studied to see how they affect the rise and fall of currencies and investments. Packages of astrological 'systems' are now on offer that swear they can and do regularly predict market trends. Businessmen and politicians regularly use astrological charts. Thatcher is said to have dabbled and David Steel even has his own personal chart.

Studying the stars is but one of a myriad of mystical 'sciences' on the market for our edification. One of the most recent additions is the study of 'parapsychology'. In reality there is absolutely nothing new about this phoney science. To put it politely, it is a belief in the paranormal, but as this has really been regarded as a bit weird in the past, it has been cloaked in pseudo-respectability with the invention of one of the ugliest words in the academic lexicon. This mumbo-jumbo is the antithesis of a scientific understanding of the world. To put it in the words of an eminent parapsychologist, a certain Dr. Keitch Hearne, "... there is no solid matter in the universe, that everything is ideas, that life and death are dreams and that maybe there is another dream after this one".

A sociological survey recently in the news revealed that the majority of people are prepared to believe in psychic phenomena, and that six in every ten interpret some personal experience as paranormal in nature. Perhaps the most prominent believer is Charles Windsor, the heir to the throne, who seems to think he has some special mission to educate people on the subject. The study of spooks has become respectable enough to even attract some Anglican churchmen. Dr. Mervyn Stockwood, former Bishop of Southwark, sees Christ as a master of the occult, and considers that it should be possible to duplicate today the paranormal events of the bible. But, as if princes and bishops were not enough, Britain now has its first professor of parapsychology in residence at Edinburgh University. This was made possible by the bequest of writer Arthur Koestler.

These are just a couple of examples of how religious type ideas sneak in through the back door while some communists are busy declaring that we don't have to worry about

religion because it is on the decline. But there are other factors for us to face. Let us just look at one big one: the United States.

The United States of America, the most technologically advanced country in the world, is also god's own country. Ninety-four per cent of Americans say they believe in god. Being American includes being religious, and finding in religion a sanction for the bourgeois individualist values of competition and self help. In no other country has religion been so moulded to reflect capitalist society and its way of life. This was possible in the absence of any established church to hinder the formation and evolution of these new religious organisations.

The US establishment is full of those proclaiming religious belief, not least the 'born again' Christian, Ronald Reagan. Religious organisations in the States are becoming influential in the political scene, particularly on the far right of the spectrum. By 1980 the electorate included forty million born-again Christians. The tactic they have specialised in is single issue campaigns, which mobilise large numbers of people and copious funds behind reactionary causes: *against* abortion, bussing, gay and women's rights, and *in favour* of capital punishment, school prayer and creationism (a theory opposed to that of evolution).

Despite the formal emphasis on 'single issues', the unity of the different policies is quite patent: the mixture of reasserting 'traditional' family and religious values at home with militarism abroad, both seen as a response to some dangerous menace. Patriotism and warmongering paranoia combine easily with piety and domestic repression.

Such themes as hostility to gun control, support for capital punishment and patriotism fuse the domestic single-issue approach with warmongering belligerency in a resurgent white racism and hostility to women and homosexuals — not to mention the red scare. Jerry Falwell, spokesman of the Moral Majority, has called for a speedy return to the McCarthy period. All communists should be registered, he told an audience in 1977: "We should stamp it on their foreheads and send them back to Russia ... Jesus was not a pacifist. He was not a sissy".

The advance of science is clearly not enough for men to understand their social existence and do away with mysticism to explain and justify that society. This does not just apply to capitalist countries either.

A socialist state does not an atheistic people make. It can go a very long way to achieve this and as it advances this should be ever more the case (more on this later), but it is never automatic. The less workers control their own lives and the more bureaucracy is tolerated the greater is the risk of a religious resurgence.

Poland is a good example of what can happen if the Communist Party fails to take a sufficiently strong stand against religion. In Poland the church was left to flourish and, as a result, was able to foster hatred towards the government, posing itself as the defender of workers' democracy. It has been one of the most active forces in encouraging the counterrevolutionary trade union Solidarnosc. This is not because the church is any friend to trade unionism, but because this yellow union was set on destroying socialism in Poland.

For those of us who are militant atheists — that is all genuine communists — there can be no room for complacency. All the difficulties confronting science, all its unsolved problems, are exploited for the benefit of the dogmas of the church. All discoveries in natural science are therefore of great importance to communists, because they undermine the old metaphysical world outlook and bring to the fore the dialectical conception of the world.

But as we have pointed out, this is not enough. Mere knowledge is not enough to bring social forces under the domination of society. What is necessary is for society to take possession of all means of production and to use them on a planned basis. In so far as other modes of consciousness persist in socialist society, they are hangovers from the old conditions, injurious to the consolidation and development of the socialist system. They must therefore be actively combated, and eventually must give way and disappear before the new truly human communist order.

The illusions which last longest are those of religion — these being also the oldest. "The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only finally vanish", wrote Marx, "when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow men and nature."

"The life process of communist society ...

is based on the process of material production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan".

When the life process of a society is indeed carried on by freely associated men in accordance with a settled plan, and when in consequence men are involved in none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with their fellow men and nature, then naturally enough, there is no basis left for any illusions about the conditions of human life, and human consciousness finally sheds such mystification and illusions.

IN THE PARTY

"Religion does not prevent my being a communist. I believe both in God and in communism". There are many communists who either believe this statement or would defend those that believe it. The truth is that this train of thought is dangerously false. Religion and communism are incompatible, both theoretically and practically.

Every communist must regard social phenomena (the relations between human beings, revolutions, wars, etc.) as processes which occur in accordance with definite laws. The laws of social development have been established by scientific communism, on the basis of the theory of dialectical and historical materialism, which we owe to Marx and Engels. As we have seen, this theory explains that social development is not brought about by any kind of supernatural forces. More than this, it has demonstrated that the idea of god and of supernatural powers arises at a definite stage in human history, and at another definite stage begins to disappear, as an idealistic notion which finds no confirmation in practical life and in the struggle between man and nature.

In practice, no less than theory, communism is incompatible with religious faith. The tactics of the Communist Party prescribes for its members definite lines of conduct. The moral code of every religion, in like manner, prescribes for the faithful some definite line of conduct. In most cases there is an irreconcilable conflict between the principles of communist tactics and the commandments of religion.

For example, the Christian code runs: 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'. Thus those communists with religious preconceptions are often those who declare a moral objection to violence and killing of all kinds. This effectively equates the violence of the oppressed with that of the oppressor. Moral objections to such actions will only ensure the continued oppression of the working class; whether it intends to or not, it always leaves the ruling class with the winning hand. The working class cannot afford to turn the other cheek.

So far as a Communist Party should be concerned, religion is not a private affair. The Party has to be an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance, or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs.

Without a militantly materialist attitude within the Party there is no way the working class can be won away from idealism. No natural science and no materialism can hold its own in the struggle against the onslaught of bourgeois ideas unless it stands on solid philosophical grounds. This means that no softness towards religion can be indulged. It does not mean that Party members with religious beliefs are barred, but these beliefs must be militantly combated. Without this approach there can be no talk of being guided by the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

In our Party, not only are religious ideas tolerated, they are actively encouraged. In 1983 the Party set up a Religious Affairs Advisory Committee "... to find ways and means of promoting cooperation with them [religious groups] when they engage in the struggle for Peace and Social Justice ... Much more needs to be done if these people are to be drawn into the Broad Democratic Alliance envisaged in the *British Road to Socialism*."

"It is important that the committee should include atheists, agnostics, Christians and members of non-Christian religions" (*Communist Focus*, February 4 1983).

Needless to say, our Party currently has a policy whereby religious beliefs among Party members is a private concern. But of course it is

not the church that is transformed by such policies and alliances, on the contrary, it is the Communist Party. Communists can make no compromises with religion. Consistent materialism is essential if workers are not to become befuddled with religious ideas. After all objectively every modern religion is a barrier to the future.

Thus there can be no question of allying with 'progressive' elements in the church, the goodies, against the reactionary forces, the baddies. To ally with these ideas is to dilute the power of the working class. Socialism will not be achieved by the working class lining up with the church and begging reforms from the ruling class.

This was the type of illusion the Russian working class of 1905 had when it followed Father Gapon in his Union to Alleviate the Misery of the Workers. He organised a march of workers to present a petition to the Tsar. As these peaceful marchers proceeded, singing hymns, the troops shot them down, killing many. The church can only lead the working class to defeat; you cannot appeal to the good nature of the ruling class when it is in crisis, you cannot ask them to hang themselves. The only way to defeat the ruling class is through being guided by a materialist analysis, by knowing the rules of the game. Lenin made this absolutely clear: "We must combat religion — that is that ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism".

IN THE WORKING CLASS

It is the task of the Communist Party to impress firmly upon the minds of the workers, especially those where religion has its greatest hold, such as women, blacks and Asians, that religion has been in the past and still is today one of the most powerful means at the disposal of the oppressors for the maintenance of inequality and exploitation.

Many communists are of the opinion that religious belief is very weak amongst the British, or certainly that it is in decline. In 1982 a Gallup Poll showed that 76% of British people believed in god (see Table 1); moreover Table 2 indicates that many people still continue to identify with a church and feel they have a religious denomination.

But more than this, while the overall numbers in religious groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Krishna Consciousness remain small, they have experienced significant growth in recent years. And, if we look at the number of people who believe in superstitious rituals such as touching wood, or throwing salt, and those who strongly believe in astrology, fortune telling, ghosts and premonitions, it is clear that the reign of superstition still persists.

Not only is religious belief still surprisingly strong, religious groups have also been taking a more actively political role. In Britain there has been a move to the right by Christians, although by no means as powerful as in the US, and this trend is definitely growing despite the main churches losing members.

The targets are familiar: abortion, divorce, gays, blacks, communists. Groups such as Care Trust and The Christian Affirmation Campaign produce expensive publicity material to spread their particularly poisonous message.

The other side of the clerical coin is that of the 'progressives'. These are the types the Euros and the *Morning Star* eulogise, such as the Bishop of Durham. The 'progressives' speak out against poverty and social injustice, they preach good old Christian charity. This is not an attempt to introduce the socialist millennium, certainly not as they also preach against violent militancy and Marxism. No, these windbags are, like most liberals, harking back to the halcyon days of consensus politics. Their intention is to maintain the status quo, to preach a little more charity to ensure that the exploiters are allowed to continue their stock in trade.

It is essential that these elements are exposed, otherwise we are guilty of fostering the illusions the working class may have about the church and religion. It is the job of communists to expose these false allies as the foes they really are.

Religion still retains a grip in the working class movement, not least amongst reformist leaders such as Scargill, Benn, Heffer and the

TABLE 1: "WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU BELIEVE IN?"

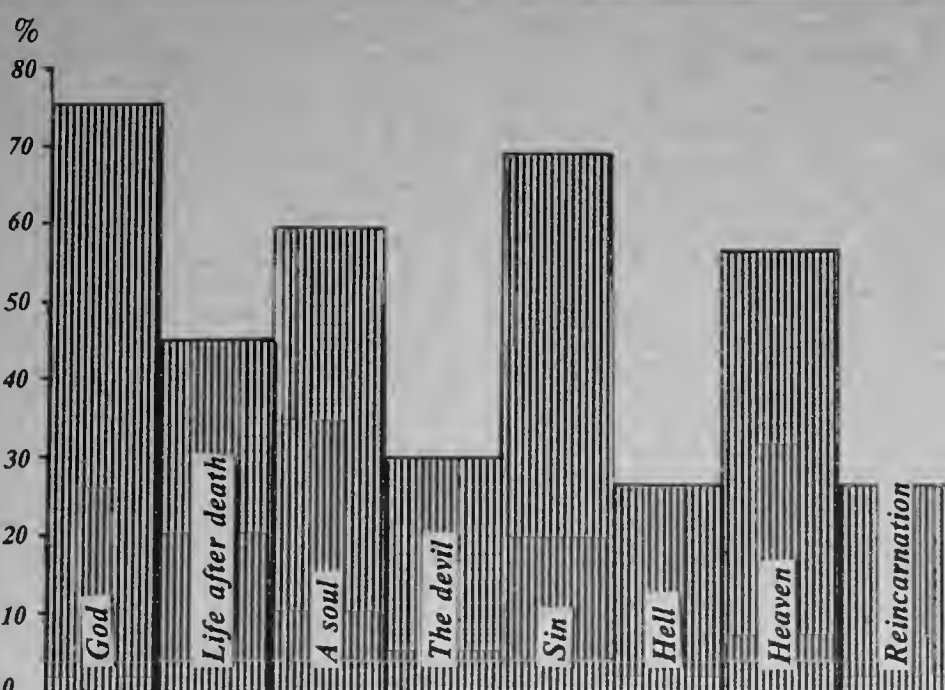
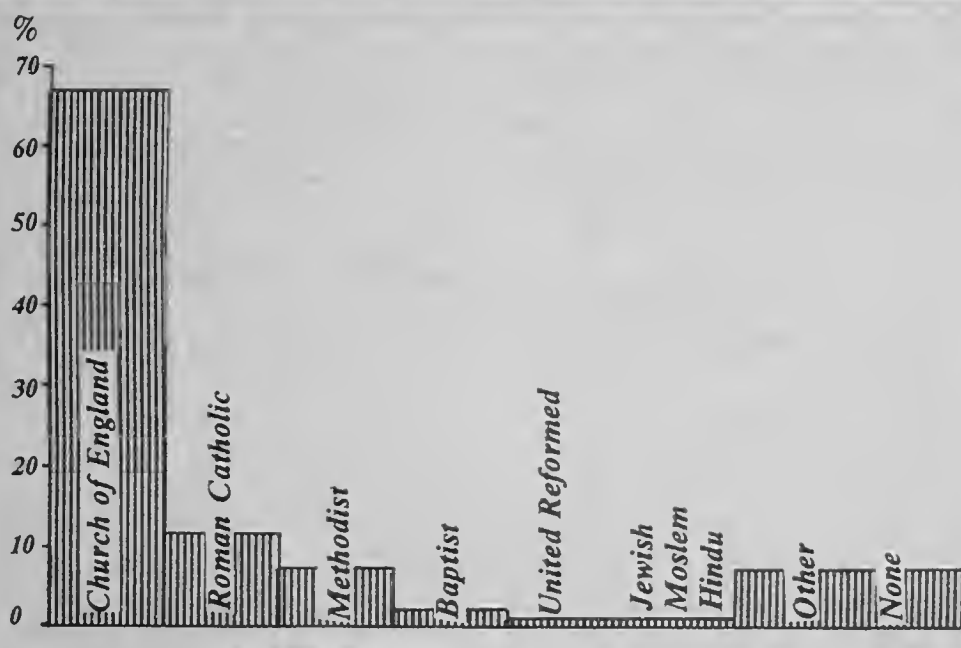


TABLE 2: "WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING, IF ANY, IS YOUR RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION?"



late Salvation Army stalwart, Terry Duffy. Leaders with religion in their heads can use the words of Jesus to convince strikers of the justness of their cause, but the same words can all too easily be used to cover for backsliding and rotten compromise with the powers that be.

Those with god on their side usually wind up on the other side to the working class at the end of the day. However, it is no good simply denouncing these people. The best way of shattering religious illusions amongst the working class is by drawing them into struggle.

Education and propaganda, though useful tools, cannot eradicate religion from the minds of those who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those workers themselves learn to fight this root of religion, the rule of capital, in all its forms. Marxists must lead this fight, they must be materialists, i.e. enemies of religion, but dialectical materialists, which means that the struggle against religion must not be treated in an abstract, purely theoretical way but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is going on in practice and which educates the oppressed better than anything else could.

IN THE SOCIALIST STATE

The struggle with religion has two sides, and every communist must distinguish clearly between them. On the one hand we have the struggle with the church, as a special organisation existing for religious propaganda, materially interested in the maintenance of

popular ignorance and religious enslavement. On the other hand we have the struggle with the widely diffused and deeply engrained prejudices of the majority of the population.

Once formed, the proletarian state has to separate the church from the state. This is what happened in Soviet Russia: all landed estates were taken away from the church and handed over to the working population; all the capital of the church became the property of the workers. In addition, the programme of the Party declared that the Soviet state "rejects all thoughts of using the Church in any way whatever as a means for strengthening the proletarian State". This is a far cry from the dreams of the CPGB 'Marxist' philosophers who sought to justify the BRS on the basis of the formal socialism. "A religious form can be given also to socialist strivings; and in this respect religion can, under certain conditions, play even a subsidiary positive role in the building of socialism, as we see in the case of the reformed churches in socialist countries" (M. Cornforth, *Theory of Knowledge*). Bogdanov's mistakes pale in comparison. God cannot, must not, be given a socialist face-lift. To do so, far from strengthening the socialist infant, can infect and hold it back.

This does not mean that religion should be banned by the dictatorship of the proletariat, but that it must become the affair of the individual, everyone must have the freedom to profess any religion they please. At the same time it is essential for the Party to wage a vigorous war against religious prejudices. Why? If we do not the church will become a counterrevolutionary organisation, endeavouring to use its religious influence over the workers in order to marshal them against the dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, this struggle must always be conducted with patience. To thrust atheism

upon people, would not assist but hinder the campaign against religion. If the church were to be persecuted it would win sympathy among the masses. This was precisely what Engels attacked Dühring for advocating: "...he incites his gendarmes of the future against religion, and thereby helps it to martyrdom and a prolonged lease of life".

Patient and consistent education against religion, combined with the strengthening of a socialist system, will deal religion a body blow. The transition from the society which ends capitalism to the society which is completely free from all traces of class, will bring about the death of all religion and superstition. None of us here today will live long enough to see the fulfilment of this process, but it is our historic task to combat religious illusions wherever we find them, not to give them a prolonged lease of life and thus stop the wheel towards communist society in its tracks.

FUEL THE FUTURE

It would be fatal for us, on the eve of 1987, to be complacent about the future of religion in Britain. There is more to it than reclaiming orthodoxy, we also have to assess where we are at. A mass religious phenomenon is not out of the question in present day Britain and, as capitalism draws society further into a period of social decay, it must be a serious possibility.

As mass unemployment, poverty, poor education and declining health care become ever more familiar features of life in modern Britain, religion becomes a potential palliative to capitalism's ills. The resurgence of political involvement by religious organisations is an indication of this. Just how the palliative is administered, however, is a point of battle between the fire and brimstone brigade and the turn the other cheek collective.

The hardbitten right wing, like that of the United States, seeks to hold on to the fabric of society by ever more repression: increased crime rates must be combated by harsher prison sentences and capital punishment; the solution to AIDS and cervical cancer is monogamy or chastity. This last point was horrifically illustrated recently by the Bishop of Birmingham: "Unchastity was against the natural law, said the Bishop. 'Just because of this we must expect that our bodies no less than our souls are ill-adapted to it — hence the doubling of the rates of cervical cancer among many young women within the last 10 years, and hence the prospect of a catastrophic spread of Aids.' Chastity should apply before, within and outside marriage, said the Bishop." (*The Guardian*, November 19 1986).

On the other side are the 'progressive' clergy. Their arguments are based on the idea of Christian charity, they see it as their duty to defend the poor and needy. Thus we have seen church bodies call the government to order over their treatment of the miners and over the state of our inner cities.

It is not the job of communists to take sides in this religious divide, but to expose and fight them both. Communists do not back 'the lesser of two evils', they ride their own horse. The reality of the situation is that both the right and progressive (sic) wings of religion have the same aim; to preserve the existing social order. Both fear chaos will result from social decay, both fear that the oppressed will take matters into their own hands, that they will fight.

It seems unbelievable to have to state, and even argue, that communists want workers to fight, that we are yearning for the fabric of class society to crumble and will do all in our power to accelerate the process. The fact that we do feel it necessary to stress this only points to the corruption of the rest of the Party. Genuine communists do not offer a crutch to those doing all they can to prop up the capitalist system.

Pseudo-communists who foster illusions in any type of religious belief are leading workers on a mystical magical tour every bit as harmful as if they had been drugged. They distort reality and prevent the working class from taking control of their own lives.

Marxism teaches workers to put their faith in themselves, not in god, to see the world not in terms of mystery, but of discovery — a world of our own making. It is only this perspective, the struggle for and ultimately the achievement of communism, that can turn our existence into a truly free and human one. Only then will humanity control its own destiny. It is our task, here and now, to fuel that future.

Geraldine Duffy